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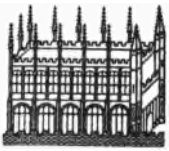

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CHARITY MOORE.

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CHARITY.

"HOME OF THE HOMELESS."

T. Tym.

[Page 14.

CHARITY MOORE:

THE STORY OF A STRAY.

BY

LINA ORMAN-COOPER.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. PYM

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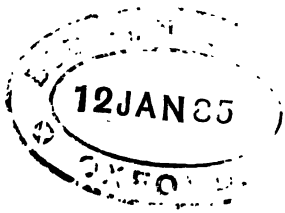

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

A BRAVE DEED 1

CHAPTER II.

THE WORKHOUSE 10

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE 25

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOST CHILD 38

CHAPTER V.

IVY'S CAPTOR 53

CHAPTER VI.

HOMELESS 64

CHAPTER VII.

FOUND 84

CHAPTER VIII.

UNEXPECTED EVENTS 99

CHAPTER IX.

"HOME" 116

CHAPTER I.

A BRAVE DEED.

"Whene'er a noble deed is wrought,
Whene'er is spoken a noble thought,
Our hearts in glad surprise
To higher levels rise."

Santa Filomena, LONGFELLOW.

IT was a cold, blustering March day. The east wind blew fiercely and wildly down the roads, dancing in eddies at the street corners, shrieking with savage glee in every narrow court, and wailing piteously at being imprisoned in the open chimneys.

Passengers walked as quickly as they could trying to keep warm, with pinched blue faces and shivering bodies. "Marbles" and "hop scotch" seemed to have lost their influence over boyish hearts, for the owners of precious "taws" and "alleys," kept their hands in their pockets, or ran up and down whistling with chattering teeth and quivering lips.

In spite of the day, Baby Melville had been wrapped up in furs and soft fleecy shawls, and, snugly ensconced in her own particular carriage, was being wheeled along the busy thoroughfare. Patty, the nursemaid, had apparently found a friend to talk to, even on this wild day, for walking beside her was a thin, seedy-looking young man. Little Miss Ivy, a wee tot of three years of age, pattered along the pavement at Patty's side, while the cruel east wind tried in vain to bite the soft white legs encased in knitted gaiters.

No! Ivy could defy anything almost in her warm pelisse and bonnet, tied closely under her chin; even the wee hands were warm in her knitted gloves.

Presently Patty stopped with her escort to look in at a fancy goods store, and Ivy, disentangling herself from her nurse's clasp, ran up and down the little space in front of the shop. Patty was suddenly startled by the clatter of horses' feet, and turning hastily she exclaimed in rapture at a troop of Horse Guards passing by.

Proudly waved the black horsehair plumes, and the sabres glittered and gleamed in the pale sunlight.

"Ain't they lovely?" said Patty to her companion; and then, she knew not how, she seemed to see a little figure scampering on to the curb-stone, tiny hands were outstretched to the "bootiful men," and then—and then—Patty covered her eyes—for there was a slip, and *something* fell into the road right under the horses' feet.

"What were you about, young woman? your charge was nearly run over!"

The speaker was a stalwart policeman, who held sobbing little Ivy in his strong arms. There was a great commotion, quite a crowd had gathered, and the sergeant had his hand on a poor girl's shoulder. "If it hadn't been for this girl, the child would have been killed."

An old gentleman in the crowd put on his spectacles to see the heroine of the adventure; he only saw a slight, thin girl, dressed in grey wolsey; a coarse pilot jacket, much too large for her, hung in ungainly folds on her shoulders. Her feet were thrust into great boots, which would have suggested chilblains and rubbed ankles if the stocking which was visible had not been of thick blue fingering; her hair was quite hidden by a straw bonnet hideous in shape, and

brown in colour, which was tied over her ears, and her hands were encased in thick brown mittens.

"Oh! one of the workhouse girls. Well! brave, at any rate," and then the old gentleman let his eye-glasses fall and walked away.

Meanwhile, the column to which the bit of humanity belonged was being marshalled into rank and file again.

The schoolmistress, a stately fat woman, bustled up to the policeman's side.

"You must let that girl come on. It is against orders for us to be loitering in the streets in this way. Do you hear, Charity, come on."

The policeman let go his hold on the shrinking shoulder, and as if she needed support the girl addressed as Charity reeled to one side.

"Are you hurt?" asked the man in sympathising tones, and Charity put her hand to her side. "I feel all sore here, sir!" and then the frightened, brave face turned pale.

"She ought to be looked to," he said to the mistress, who was hurrying the girl along.

"Well, we are not far from St. Kevin's workhouse. I suppose you can walk as far?"

The tone was hard and unsympathetic, and Charity looked up with a forced little smile. "I think so, ma'am," and, in the heavy hobnailed boots, the school marched on.

It was hard work moving, and Charity's lips whitened, when the mistress drew her hand, not unkindly, through her arm to assist her. It was not far certainly to St. Kevin's, but ere the iron gate was reached the girl's evident pain was great.

On arrival, her thick outdoor dress was removed, and the coarse underclothing being unfastened, her side was exposed, a mass of bruises and scrapes. "I suppose it was when she fell," said the matron, who had entered the room, and helped the mistress as she roughly bathed and bound it up. Afterwards Charity was put to rest in one of the blue-covered hard beds, and thankfully she lay with her eyes wide open, and her hands busy with knitting.

Meanwhile Patty, escorted by the policeman carrying little Ivy, and with the baby sleeping quietly in the perambulator, made the best of her way home. Mrs. Melville met them at the door. Ivy was sleeping in the strong arms, and her

little face looked white and delicate against the dark blue cloth.

"What has been the matter?" she enquired quietly, though her heart beat heavily.

Patty began an incoherent explanation, but was stopped by Mrs. Melville.

"Be quiet, Patty! the sergeant will tell me all." In the meanwhile, Ivy had found a softer resting-place in the mother's arms stretched out for her, and the policeman was telling the story.

"You see, ma'am, your nursemaid was taken up with the soldiers, and didn't see the little miss run on to the curb. The Charity School was passing, and one of the girls ran forward quickly, like a flash of lightning, one might say, ma'am, and just as the little lady got under the horse's feet she snatched her up; then there seemed no time for her to escape, so she just flung herself out of the horse's way on her side on the pavement."

What wonder that the mother's heart went out to the little Ivy first—"Was *she* hurt at all?" kissing the slumbering face on her bosom.

"Not that I knows on, ma'am, she seemed all right."

"Thank God!" murmured Mrs. Melville; then added quickly, "And the girl, Sergeant!"

"Well, I'm feared *she* must have got a tidy blow, for she fell right on the curb, *under* the baby, you see, ma'am."

"What became of her?"

"Oh! she went off to the workhouse, and I suppose"—the tone was very dubious—"they'll look after her there."

"What workhouse was it?"

"Oh, St. Kevin's, to be sure, not so very far from here! Thank you, ma'am—much obliged, I'm sure," as Mrs. Melville slipped a coin into his hand. "Good-day. Good-day, young woman," this to Patty; and then, in a lower tone as he was going out of the door, "Better look after your charges a little closer, miss, another time. Charity girls as brave as yon ain't to be met with *every* day."

Patty returned to the room fearfully after letting the policeman out, but Mrs. Melville did not say much. "I think your fright must have been punishment enough" (Patty's face was all red and swollen with the combined influence of east wind and copious tears), "so I shall only

give you a warning. I shall watch you very closely, Patty, and if I see *any* carelessness again, I shall dismiss you."

Mrs. Melville spoke very quietly, but there was a world of determination in the soft tones; and as she gazed once more on the sweet little face pressed to her breast, she said in a choked voice, "Oh, Patty! what grief you nearly caused me."

That evening, when Mr. Melville came home to dinner, his wife told him all the story. Her husband's face darkened and grew stern. "That girl Patty will have to leave, Dorothy!"

"Well, I have spoken to her, Richard, and I think she is *really* sorry for her carelessness, I do not think it will happen again. She seemed very penitent indeed, and I only felt so thankful to have our darling safe, I agreed to let her stay on!" Mr. Melville raised his eyebrows, but his usual "As you think best" allowed her decision to rest unquestioned.

"I should like to go and see the girl! The policeman said she must have been hurt."

"Of course—of course—we must do something for her! But St. Kevin's, dear, is hardly a place for *you* to go to."

"Oh! Richard, I should so like to go and thank her *in person*." And then she told him of a little scheme in her head, of how, if the workhouse child had a good character from the matron for truthfulness and honesty, she might take her into the nursery.

"The two children are really more than Patty can look after, and it would be a kind—a Christ-like thing, to take in this little stranger. She almost gave her life for our little daughter—it seems now that we ought to do something for that life."

That night, after the two, on their knees, kneeling beside little Ivy's cot, had thanked their heavenly Father for sparing her to them, Mr. Melville turned to his wife and said,—

"We will have the girl, and she shall help to take care of our Ivy."

CHAPTER II.

THE WORKHOUSE.

"Only, alas! the poor, who had neither friends nor attendants,
Crept away to die in the almshouse, home of the homeless."
LONGFELLOW.

ST. KEVIN'S was a dreary-looking, red-brick building, surrounded by a paved courtyard, and approached only through a prison-like barred and bolted iron gate.

Mrs. Melville stood on the steps outside, while the busy hum of ceaseless human life rolled on one side of her, while on the other stood this mausoleum of hopes and lives. The gate was unlocked by an old pauper dressed in the rough corduroys and chequered cap of the institution, and he blinked at the apparition of the sweet-faced lady on the step.

"Dunno," he said in answer to Mrs. Melville's inquiries as to whether the matron were at home; and then, in response to an unspoken invitation, she stepped through the courtyard into the flagged hall.

From either side ran low whitewashed passages, with benches, on which sat the expectant recipients of "outdoor relief," and Mrs. Melville thought she never saw a more miserable set of objects.

The shaky old men, blousy-faced viragoes, slatternly girls, and crippled lads, touched her with a kind of pitying aversion. A sort of ticket office was opened, and here in file the people passed before the Guardian, who doled out pence and bread with niggardly hand.

Mrs. Melville had time to notice all this before the porter came. With shuffling walk, the bent figure went on to lead the way, and the lady was ushered into the "committee room."

Here she was left, to speculate on the hard-backed chairs and marble busts surrounding her until the matron appeared.

Mrs. Smithies, the hard-faced woman we met before at Charity's bedside, was not improved by nearer acquaintance. A certain flashiness of dress and glitter of bangles and bugles corresponded with her high cheek bones and cold flashing eyes. Mrs. Melville took an instantaneous dislike to her, though her manner was smooth and conciliatory.

She listened attentively while the lady told her errand. "Of course you can see Charity Moore if you wish it. It is visiting day, and I can prevent no one seeing their friends." This was said very much as if she wished she *could.* "Will you walk this way?"

Grandly she piloted Mrs. Melville down the dark cold corridors, through never-ending doors, until she reached the dining-hall.

Here a long melancholy row of narrow wooden tables were "laid" ready for a meal. The arrangements were almost hideous in their bareness.

Small wooden bowls of salt were sparely laid at certain intervals; wooden platters, smeared with grease, and thick earthenware cups were set in each "place." Wicker-work baskets were at the end of the tables for "potatoes," as the matron explained, and a pewter spoon and fork beside some larger bowls denoted it was "soup day." The indescribable odour of stale eatables sickened Mrs. Melville, but she was pleased to see some framed fragments of God's Word smiling at her from the walls.

Presently they came to the "aged women's

ward," as was explained by a label outside the door. Here a group of old dames were gathered round the fire brewing a cup of tea, their sole luxury. Then on into an enclosed courtyard where the children were "at play."

Mrs. Melville had tears in her eyes as she noticed how even workhouse discipline had not quenched *quite* all the childishness in the little people.

Here a small boy, in heavy-soled boots and rough corduroys, with the thick chequered cap, and the ball on the top of his head, playing "hop-scotch" with another a little older; there a poor little mite, "only as big as my Ivy," in a grey frock to the top of her shoes, a miniature woman, was walking gravely up and down, hushing a broken wooden doll in her arms. The elder girls (most of them with sullen indifferent expressions on their faces) were skipping or walking about briskly.

"Where is Charity Moore?" The question was addressed sharply to a big-boned girl who stood near.

"'Tis her day in the nursery. I s'pose she's there." The answer was sullen.

Mrs. Melville's heart was sore for the poor knocked-about children. On again, until they came into a separate room, lighted with a big fire; here were the "babies," poor little waifs picked up in the streets, or left by their heartless mothers to the seldom tender care of hired officials,—babies with rosy cheeks, babies white and ailing, babies merry and babies sad, all in the same blue woollen frocks, and all with their heads encased in stiff linen caps.

"Charity! Charity Moore!" and slowly the girl came forward, holding in a motherly manner one of the most fretful of the children. Mrs. Melville looked at her,—was *this* girl a heroine? this girl with the shy frightened manner, and the close roughly-cropped hair? this girl with the shrinking grey eyes and angular figure?

"Charity! Here is a lady come to see you." Mrs. Melville took the one unoccupied hand in her own kind ones.

"I have come to thank you, Charity, for saving my little girl." The mother's voice was trembling, and Charity looked shy and awkward, but did not say anything.

Presently she enquired, "How is the little girl,

ma'am?" Mrs. Melville did not know how, during the few days which had elapsed since the accident, Charity's memory had dwelt on the flower-like little face and golden hair; she did not know, either, that Charity's companions had had the little lady frequently described to them. She heard a strange inflection, however, in the girl's voice, and answered quickly, "Quite well, thank you, Charity! she had not even a bruise; but I heard *you* were hurt, child. Is your side well yet?"

"Oh! it was nothing," interposed the matron; "it hardly ached, even, the next day!"

Charity knew that even *now* it was painful and sore, but she did not contradict Mrs. Smithies, it seemed hardly worth while—what did it matter?

After a few more words Mrs. Melville followed her evidently impatient conductor away. "Good-bye, and God bless you, Charity! be sure I shall not forget you."

Like a sunbeam she was gone, and poor Charity felt as if all the light had deserted the ugly nursery with her.

The baby in her arms began to wail and cry, and Charity walked up and down the bare floor,

with the little thing leaning over her shoulder. With one hand she patted it softly on the back, the other, with a strange romantic feeling, she raised to her lips,—it was the one Mrs. Melville had held so gently and gratefully!

"If it would not be taking up your time, Mrs. Smithies," said Mrs. Melville, as they regained the committee room, "I should like to hear Charity's story."

Even the hard matron had been won over by the sweet smile and gentle ways of her visitor, and she answered briskly, "If you will step into my room, ma'am! this is such a cold place for you to sit in." Mrs. Smithies' room was a very comfortable one: a warm glow from the huge fire pervaded it, a soft carpet was on the floor, a handsome mirror over the fireplace, a bird in a gilded cage hung in the window, and sundry luxurious easy chairs were scattered here and there.

"Sit down, ma'am," said the matron, motioning Mrs. Melville into a seat. "I will tell you what I can, but there is not much I know. It is sixteen years ago, on a snowy day, that Charity Moore came to this place. I was sitting here quite cosy

with Letitia my daughter, then quite a little girl, when the hall porter came to the door there and knocked. I said 'Come in,' and he entered with a queer-looking bundle in his arms. It was nine o'clock at night, and he had heard a knock at the front door. Before he could get to it the person had gone, and there was no one to be seen, but just as he was about to bolt and bar the door he heard a little wailing cry, and looking down he saw a bundle at his feet. He wasn't much astonished, for we often have things happen like that. Unnatural? Yes, so it is, but quite often mothers leave their babies like that when they are ashamed of them, or have not enough to feed them on! Well, Jenkins picked it up and brought it to me. Of course I unpacked it. There were some old shawls tied carefully round it, but the clothes were coarse and untrimmed, evidently a poor person's child. All the things were marked C. M., and hanging round its neck was a heart-shaped locket, quite a common thing, with the same initials cut on it. The baby was about six weeks old, and after it was dressed in the workhouse clothes I made her own into a bundle, ticketed it, and put it away. Oh! yes, that is our usual

custom, so that if any inquiries ever come to us we have *one* clue at least.

"Well, very soon the question of christening the child came on, and the chaplain, Mr. Rainsford, got a queer idea about it. 'Call it Charity,' he said—'the heart always means that; if it had been a cross we would have called her Faith, if an anchor, Hope, but the heart *can* only signify Charity.'

"'But the second name, sir?' I said.

"He thought for a moment. 'I will stand godfather,' he said, 'call the child Moore, it is my second name.'

"So Charity Moore she was called.

"The chaplain went away soon after, and Charity has grown up here.

"We were just looking out for a place for her. Our girls usually go out to service before they are as old as she is, but Charity has been of so much use in the nursery we really did not care to let her go."

"Is she honest and trustworthy, Mrs. Smithies? indeed I need scarcely ask the last, from her behaviour to my child."

"Yes! that she is, ma'am;" and then the two

talked over Charity Moore's future, the conference ending in Mrs. Melville's saying, as she rose to go,—

"Well, Mrs. Smithies, I will speak to my husband, and if he is of the same mind as he was, I will send for my new nursemaid. Thank you very much for all the trouble you have given yourself."

Mrs. Smithies was not proof against the sweet farewell smile, and gave a cordial one in parting. Indeed, Jenkins was done out of a shilling Mrs. Melville had intended giving him, as she accompanied the lady to the door, and chatted with her up to the last moment.

Not many days after this, Mrs. Smithies called Charity Moore to her room. The girl had never seen the inside of the little sanctum before, and looked round at the different luxurious fittings with wide-open wondering eyes. "They were more beautiful than you can imagine," she said to her companions afterwards. "A yellow bird in a gold cage which sang just wonderful! and picters of dogs, and trees, and horses—and such curtains! all made o' velvet stuff." However, just now she had no time but to make a rapid

survey, for Mrs. Smithies recalled her wandering attention.

"Charity Moore! listen to me, and don't spy about at everything." Obediently the grey eyes were turned to the matron, and the mittened hands duly and submissively folded.

"Charity, that lady, Mrs. Melville, has been writing to me about you. She says, *if* you are truthful and honest" (Mrs. Smithies dwelt on the words as if Charity's soul must acknowledge she was neither)—"if you are truthful and honest—"

"Yes'm," said the girl, in the slight pause which followed.

"She is willing to make you useful in her house, you are to help the nurse"—Charity's eyes sparkled —"and be generally obedient and obliging. Of course you are to go. Mrs. Melville will send for you in a couple of days. In the meanwhile you must work hard, mind, to make some underclothing for yourself, the mistress will cut it out. You may go."

Charity bobbed a little curtsey and retired from the room, then with quick feet flew to the playground to tell her companions of her good fortune, and they all sympathised with her as much as

their dull, heavy natures were capable of. Sewing filled up the two days which were to elapse, and Charity lived in a bright world of expectation; with every long seam she stitched sweet hopes were twined; with every gusset set she turned in visions of happiness; with every hem was tucked a bit of joy!

At last the morning for departure dawned, and Charity, for the first time in her life, donned garments which did not bear the open brand of pauperism. Certainly the dress had been bought with hard workhouse cash, but the sombre grey had been changed for a russet brown, the hideous bonnet for a hat of somewhat becoming shape, and the harsh stockings for soft knitted ones.

Charity put on everything with glee, and then went into the "nursery" to say good-bye to her charges. There was the familiar playground, there the poor girls to be left behind, still habited in workhouse uniform, there the babies! Ah! Charity's heart was full, and when she had a wizened-faced, ugly atom of humanity in her arms, and another,—a toddler this of three years of age,—with a face on which neglect and dirt had

stamped premature oldness, pulling the brown gown, she just sat on the floor and cried.

"How can I leave you, wee Jimmy? no one will be kind to you when Charity goes!" and she kissed the snub nose and vacant eyes of the very ugly baby she held. Jimmy did not seem grateful for the kiss, for he wrinkled up his face, flung out a shrivelled little fist, and began to cry.

Charity thought he was howling in sympathy with her, and the big tears rolled more piteously down her cheeks.

"Me doesn't care if you *are* going." The owner of the voice was a little girl, half out of her wits, on whom Charity had expended a wealth of love and tenderness.

"Oh yes! you do, Beattie"—Charity had on her old soothing tones,—"don't you love me at all?"

"No! no! no!" and the child had seized the new hat, and was about to tear it off the owner's head when the mistress appeared.

She was indignant to find Charity all bundled up on the floor, her face stained with tears, her clean collar crumpled by the baby's helpless fingers, and her hat threatened with destruction. With a dart she rescued it from the would-be

cruel little grasp, and with a smart slap of her hand sent Beattie "to the whereabouts," as she framed it.

"Get up off the floor, Charity Moore, this minute! Here comes——" In a moment the girl had risen and was striving to compose herself, when Mrs. Melville appeared with Mrs. Smithies at the door.

"I have come to fetch you, Charity!" It was the voice Charity remembered so well, which had said "God bless you" so kindly. Her heart, however, was beating heavily and sorrowfully at parting with her friends, and she did not wish Mrs. Melville to see her tear-stained face.

She did not turn for a moment, and in another instant a little figure, clad in fur pelisse and crimson bonnet, a little figure soft and round in form, ran across the room, and stretching out tiny hands, said, in a sweet little frightened voice,—

"Charity! will oo come with me?"

Ah! Mrs. Melville had been wise in selecting little Ivy to be the one to woo away the girl from her old life.

With her whole soul in her tones, her face

lighted up with tender eagerness, and her voice full of happiness, Charity turned and kissed the rosebud of a face. "Of course I will come, my little lady!"

CHAPTER III.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why."
Higher Pantheism, TENNYSON.

CHARITY'S new home was a tall, three-storied house, in one of the quiet streets in Bayswater; out of one of the busiest of thoroughfares you suddenly turned into a square, suggestive certainly of soot and dust, but still a square, planted with trees and shrubs. Here sweet blooming flowers, too, lined the walks, but protected by wire fencing. Here an apology for soft green grass was to be found, and here the larch flung out its tender green tassels to greet the spring, and the spreading beeches blushed at the coming frost. Here, too, might be heard the cheerful twitter of the house-sparrows, and even now and then a swallow skims down.

Mrs. Melville had been a country girl, brought

up in the sound of low cooing wood pigeons and sweet trilling nightingales. In sight of sparkling waters and fresh sweet flowers Richard Melville had wooed and won her out of a quaint old manor house, and brought her to live with him in "gold-paved" London. Dorothy Melville was glad to put her hand into her brave lover's, her knight par excellence, "sans peur et sans reproche," and to wander away with him into the unknown future. And she was happy, very happy, in the three-storied London house, with its plate-glass windows and thin walls. Still, no gold she had ever seen was half so beautiful as the saffron sky she remembered at sunset over her beloved old home; no crimson velvet in the shop windows half so splendid as the dawn she had often been up to see; no silver glittered half so brightly as the stars had done when they twinkled good-night to her over the oak trees, no diamonds so sparkling as the dew gems of olden days, no house so fair as her old home. Yet in the new one she was happy; Ivy and baby filled up any vacancy there *might* have been in the changed young life, and she was happy, too, in a life of devotion to God. The bells of St. Mark's never rang a more true-hearted

worshipper to service, no organ played an accompaniment to a sweeter voice than that of St. Mark's did to her who made "melody in her heart to the Lord." No bedridden old woman, or wasting young girl, had ever a more sympathetic and comforting visitor. And so Dorothy Melville was happy, and bright, and contented, because busy on her Father's business. The every-day cares were brightened with a Father's smile, the everyday worries taken from a Father's hand! "Nothing was 'little' that brightened her home, or small if crossed by His name."

Now a new element had come in her life, and she took it as coming from an All-Divine power. This workhouse girl, with her untrained impulsive nature, her loving heart, her full devotion, was a page on which she must write the Master's name.

Mrs. Melville's face was very grave as she thought of the life given into her hands to mould. The firelight glittered and flashed on the brass knobs of the fender, and on the frames hung round the room, but it lighted up nothing half so beautiful as the face gazing at it in half-perplexed thought.

Did I say Dorothy Melville was pretty? She

was that, if bright golden hair, deep blue eyes, and sweet mouth were all she possessed in the way of attractions,—She was beautiful in that, in addition, was the sweetest smile on the sensitive mouth, and a deep glow of humility and sympathy in the shining eyes.

She was thinking now of Charity's future, and as she thinks she prays—prays for grace to *live* before her little handmaiden a life which will lead her to Christ.

Five o'clock strikes from the silver-tongued clock on the mantelpiece, and Mrs. Melville's look of thoughtfulness has vanished. With girlish eagerness she jumps up off the rug,—"the children's hour" is come, and mother is looked for in the nursery.

As she opens the nursery door, a pretty picture presents itself. Charity has not been more than two months in the house, and already little Ivy has installed her as third in her loving little heart,—"Dada first! mudder second, and Cherry third;" so now, while Patty has the baby tossing to and fro in her strong arms, little Ivy has her hands twined round Charity's neck, who speaks low and lovingly to her.

": CHERRY."

[*Page* 28.

The turning door-handle is noticed at once, and "mudder" is welcomed in baby syllables. Charity rises, and stands in front of her mistress. Such a change in her already! The intercourse with refinement has begun to tell on the sympathetic temperament. The brown hair, short still, but beginning to crisp and wave over the head, is glossy, so different to the scraggy roughness of workhouse clippings. The grey eyes and mouth tremble at every word, not with fear, though, any longer. The brown dress is surmounted by a clean linen collar, a hem of white showing at the wrists as well. The starched apron is a little tossed with Ivy's energetic presence, and a cap *will* not stay on the crisp curls; otherwise, Charity Moore has developed into the ideal of a housemaid. Pretty she is not—Patty, with her buxom cheeks and ruddy hair, quite throws her in the shade as to personal looks, but Patty can never have the same steadfast calmness the young face before her exhibits!

"Now for a talk," says the young mistress, and without any thoughts of freedom or familiarity the two nurses draw chairs to the fire and sit down. The "talk" that follows is a simple one.

Ivy joins in even with a question or two, and baby coos an accompaniment, but still those talks are better to *one* of the listeners than any Bible class. Presently dinner time is come. "Dood night! dear sweet darling mudder," comes from Ivy, a sleepy little pout from baby, and then Mrs. Melville, with a "God bless my darlings," goes down. The children are undressed, Ivy says her prayers, her short, simple little formula, to mother, who comes up again for the purpose. Then the round head is laid on a soft pillow in the little crib, the blue eyes close, and Ivy is asleep.

It is a quiet, simple enough life that is lived in the big house, a life that brings out all the good qualities in the workhouse girl's heart, a life in which for a time the old dark background is forgotten in the brightness of the present. She is to be recalled to it, however.

One day, as Patty and Charity are out for a walk with their charges, the former wheeling the perambulator, the latter with a firm clasp of Ivy's soft little hand, a tall uncouth-looking man draws near, and gazes at Charity with coarse inquisitive eyes. Patty sees him first, however, for

Charity is engaged in piloting the little pink-shoed feet through the dust. It is hot and sunshiny, and Patty wants some little variety in her life, so she says quite eagerly, "Look yon, Charity! that man seems to be looking at you hard."

The calm grey eyes are lifted with a flash. The calmness goes out of them instantly; and apparently the man is now convinced that the girl is the one he thinks her to be. Swaggering up with a friendly air, he stretches out a large hand. "How de do, Charity? Morning, miss"—this to Patty, who likes to be addressed as "miss," and smirks and bridles accordingly. Charity puts her hand into the man's, and speaks eagerly. "How are you, Donavon? It is a long time since I saw you."

"Yes!" says the man, "I left the—the—big house soon after you. Well, how do you find yourself? you are looking bravely!"

Charity flushes. "I am very happy. Have you got work to do?"

"Oh, yes! plenty. I am quite the swell cove now." Donavon draws a handkerchief from the breast pocket of his shabby-looking coat, and

waves it ostentatiously. "I have quite a paying employment already."

"Then you don't keep school now?" Charity has quite forgotten her mistress's often expressed wish, that there should be no loitering in the streets, in her pleasure at seeing a familiar face.

Patty, however, silently makes a note of the imprudence, and treasures it up for future use. She has never quite forgiven Charity for coming into the house, or for having played a heroine's part at her (Patty's) expense.

"Oh, no! school don't pay!" This was in answer to Charity's last question. "There are other things, I can tell you, Charity, that come easier to a man, and bring more cash, than hugger-muggering over boys and girls! My! usen't I to have a time o' it in the House? Them boys were an awful set!—never again do I go in for it if I can help. Talk of bread of idleness! didn't I have to work for my victuals in yon house?"

Charity, in spite of her gladness at seeing an old friend, and one who had acted as under-schoolmaster during some months of her old

life, began not to like the tone of Mr. Donavon's talk. I am afraid it was only this that made her recall her mistress's wishes, for I am bound to say Charity was so warm-hearted and impulsive that it required *some* unpleasant spur to make her break off the conversation.

"We ought to be going on, Patty, I think. Come and see me at 7, Trevor Square, Donavon! I am sure my mistress will like to see you!"

Donavon's face was a study as he watched the two girls walking away! "So you live *there*," he said to himself. "Well, Charity Moore, your 'umble servant will remember that! No visits from me, though, to your mistress—she would stuff tracts and piousness down my throat! Faugh!"

Meanwhile Patty was giving her companion a piece of her mind.

"I wonder at you, Charity! when mistress says especially we ain't to talk to any one in the road. My! what a flare up *I* had because I used to let my young man walk with me! she said I should go if she caught me at it again. and you, pretending to be so quiet and good!"

"Oh, Patty! I forgot all about it first, and

you don't *really* think, do you? that mistress will mind my speaking to an old friend."

"Wasn't Brown an old friend o' mine!" mimicking Charity's distress, "and hadn't I to send him marching after we had kept company for more than two years."

They walked on in silence for a moment. Charity's perturbation was evident, and Patty, thinking it might be well to have some hold over the girl who had supplanted her, whispered presently, "I won't tell, Charity, if you don't wish me to."

Up to this moment no idea of hiding her meeting with Donavon had ever entered Charity's mind, but the first drop of the tempter's poison had entered her heart—would it be wrong not to mention it to Mrs. Melville? After all, it was of no great importance, and her mistress was far from strong. No, Charity would not vex her unless asked about it.

So the one downward step was taken that was to end in such unhappiness. When Charity's compromise with truth had been fairly started on she was unhappy for a little while. Mrs. Melville called the nurses into the drawing-room

as they were coming into the house, and kissing little Ivy, asked them where they had been. Here was an opportunity for Charity to tell her mistress of her meeting with Donavon, but Patty replied volubly, and the moment was gone. It seemed as if Mrs. Melville knew what had taken place, and was giving Charity an opportunity of unbosoming herself, for she asked rather pointedly, "Did you meet no one you knew while you were out?"

"Oh yes! ma'am;" it was Patty spoke, and Charity busied herself in arranging Ivy's golden curls, which had been blown about rather—"we saw young Master Osborne and Miss Villiers." Charity wondered at herself with a little thrill of contempt at not speaking out, but now the opportunity was lost. Mr. Melville came bustling in, and the nursemaids went upstairs.

Alas! this was a crooked path Charity had entered on. She was angry with herself, so angry, and then with a flash there came the remembrance of her invitation to Donavon! What if he should avail himself of it? What if he should turn up and say she, Charity Moore, had told him to come? and again, what if little

Ivy were to mention the "big man," and Mrs. Melville were to enquire who he was! That day and the next Charity started and turned a guilty red at every clang of the bell, at every fall of the knocker, at every summons to her mistress. Yet after all, as Patty tried to reason with her, she had only tried to save Mrs. Melville worry, just now, when worry would be hurtful to her.

Patty might persuade herself that the dark byway was illumined with the sun of truth. Charity was too honest-minded. She knew she had been deceitful—deceitful to the best and kindest of mistresses, and she only waited for the time when she might with safety tell Mrs. Melville all. Alas! before that time came Charity was far away.

Day after day, as the girls took out the children for their daily stroll, Donavon met them. He seemed instinctively to know that these meetings were unknown to their mistress, and the knowledge seemed to add piquancy to them. Charity was morbidly conscious of her fault, and her first open, hearty greeting to her "old friend" had long subsided into indifference first, then dislike.

Patty rallied her upon the change; Charity flushed and said she might do as she liked, she supposed.

Donavon at last joined them every day, and Charity was powerless.

With presents of goodies and cakes he tried to gain Ivy's affections, but this the nurses would not allow. "Miss Ivy is never allowed to eat those things," Patty would say, and Charity often took them out of the little fingers and threw them away, in spite of Ivy's anger and indignation. So at last the little thing began to look upon the big rough man she at first shrank from with affection, as the offerer of good things, which "her nasty nurses" took away.

This was just what Donavon wanted.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOST CHILD.

"A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part of a truth is a harder matter to fight."
TENNYSON.

IT was about a fortnight after the events narrated in the last chapter, that after a time of much anxiety and suspense, Charity sat in front of the nursery fire with a little bundle wrapped in flannel on her lap. For a few minutes she had been trusted with the new baby, Mrs. Melville's first son and heir, and with delight she gazed at the pink little face, and touched the tiny fingers.

She forgot all about Donavon and her secret, while she pressed her lips to the soft cheek, and sat still as a mouse, so as not to disturb the infant's first tranquil slumber. Ivy was asleep in her own little crib, and Patty was busy with the "old baby." So Charity had time to think. Presently with a flash comes the thought, "Now I can tell

the mistress! As soon as ever I see her I will speak about Donavon." Quite a peaceful contented look came back to the face which lately had looked so worried, and she turned round to Patty, who came to relieve her of her burden. "I shall tell the mistress now; I don't think she will be very vexed."

"Oh! don't you flatter yourself—she will be awfully wild, you will never be trusted again!"

"Well, never mind," answered Charity stoutly, "of course the mistress must know."

"Oh, as you like it!" said Patty with a flounce. "Here, give me the baby. What an ugly little brat it is! not half as pretty as Miss Ivy was!" and so the subject was turned, Charity still resolving firmly to tell Mrs. Melville everything.

"Charity, you'll have to take Miss Ivy and the baby, or Miss Sybil, I suppose we ought to say now, out to-day alone. The old nurse wants me to help her at home." So said Patty, as she packed the little child comfortably into her carriage. "Don't be long either, for the wind is very cold." Charity had not gone far, with little Ivy pattering by her side, before she saw Donavon's unwelcome figure looming in sight. Anxious to

avoid him, she turned down a corner and rapidly walked away. Donavon, however, had seen her, and was soon at her side.

"Where's Miss Patty to-day?" he enquired. "I have never met you alone before."

"The mistress is ill, and she had to stop at home—I wish, Mr. Donavon, you would leave me." She spoke curtly. "My mistress does not approve of my walking and talking with you."

"Your mistress does not know about it, I warrant me," with a wicked leer in his eyes; and Charity shrank away, as she wondered how he knew.

"I suppose Mrs. Melville sets a sight o' store by yon little missie?" he spoke quickly, with a jerk of his thumb towards little Ivy trotting ahead.

Charity's prudence deserted her. Her admiration and devotion to the little girl were a chord which would always vibrate to a touch. "Indeed you may well say so! Why, the mistress is bound up in Miss Ivy. I don't know what she would do if anything happened to her."

"Why, she has two others now!"

"But no one like the first, like Miss Ivy! Why, Donavon, she is the sweetest little thing imaginable."

The man was silent for a few minutes, while a wicked scheme floated through his brain. The employment he had boasted of to Charity could not be such a very lucrative one after all, for he was in sore need of money. The filched handkerchiefs, stolen watches, and "prigged" ornaments were just now at a discount. The police had had some warning as to certain houses of evil reputation which Michael Donavon frequented with his ill-gotten goods. The owners had accordingly let their customers know it would be prudent to "lie dark" for a while. Donavon was a man of quick thought and action, and as the idea struck his brain he breathed thick and fast. Should he get Charity to assist him? He thought the girl who could hide her meetings with him from her kind mistress would do almost anything to keep the secret. He did not know the strength of the strata of pure principle that underlaid the temporary defection from truth.

"Charity Moore, would you like to make some money?" The tone was eager; the girl turned

in surprise. "I have thought of a way. You see the little girl yonder—lend her to me for a few days, let your mistress think she is lost. She'd be in such a state! I would take great care of the little miss, would cosset and crock her wi' the best, and then when Mrs. Melville offered a reward I would bring her back so innocent like! We'd share the money, Charity Moore."

Surely Michael Donavon was carried away by his great want of money to mention such a thing. Charity's eyes flashed and her face flushed. How low she must have fallen in this man's estimation to have him propose such a thing! Her hand grasped the round handle of the perambulator with a tight grip, and she seized little Ivy's almost fiercely with the other.

"How dare you? How dare you?" she was panting with the excess of her emotion, and then Ivy began to cry.

"You's hurting me, Cherry, you's squeezing my hand."

"My little darling! my precious darling!" said poor Charity, and then she turned to Donavon. "Go! you wicked, cruel man! not for all the money in the world would I sell the

child, and when the mistress is stronger she shall know every word you have spoken!"

Donavon's eyes glowed! Yes, he knew she would do as she said—he could see it was not boasting, Charity would tell all, and he should be ruined. The poor girl had made a mistake in threatening and provoking the man. He would not leave her time to carry out her threat! He would make believe for this day at least.

"What a firebrand you have grown, Charity Moore! My! didn't I pretend well? why, girl, do you think I would be pestered with the brat? —'Not for all the money in the world,'" quoting her own words. "Good-bye for the present, good-bye, little 'un, remember me to Miss Patty," and away he slouched.

Charity drew a breath of relief and walked towards home—she would tell her mistress directly she got in! She must be strong enough now to hear it all. So thinking, she hurried her little charge along; she had been out longer than Patty had said, and little Ivy's hand felt cold in hers. Supposing the child caught cold, and the poor little feet pattering at her side

were sorely exercised to keep up with the longer steps of her nurse.

"Well! you've been a pretty long time out; and how hot you look, Charity! Take Miss Ivy upstairs," and lifting the younger child in her arms, Patty preceded the two. "Be quiet," she said as they passed the door of Mrs. Melville's room. "She's taken a bad turn, and must be kept quite quiet."

So Charity's chance of telling her mistress was postponed. What was she to do? Poor Charity! With her forehead pressed against the window-panes of the nursery, her eyes gazing wistfully at the cloud-flecked sky, she debated what to do. Tell Patty? Oh, no! she shrank from that. The master then? Mr. Melville was almost unknown to the girl, she could not go to him. He would laugh at her fears, and be angry at her deceit. So, there and then, Charity told her heavenly Father all about it! Mrs. Melville had spoken about praying to God about "everything," and so Charity with childlike obedience bowed the curly head. "Our Father which art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—she scarcely knew that she used the words

of the Master's own prayer, but straight and clear the answer came to her tossed and troubled heart, "Fear not . . . I will deliver thee."

The next day and the next passed, and though Donavon hovered about he did not propose anything of his scheme again.

Charity thought it was a joke after all, and was almost angry with herself at having taken it so much to heart. However, she had not much time to give to her own feelings, for there was great sorrow and anxiety hanging over the house. The sweet golden-haired mistress was lying dangerously ill, and Mr. Melville distracted with grief.

The new baby occupied all Patty's time, as the old nurse was needed in the sick room, and so Charity went about the house with little Ivy and wee Sybil, while her heart was full of sorrow. Those hours were drear ones when Mrs. Melville lay fighting with death, but after some little while she rallied, and then only mortal weakness had to be combated. Patty was very patient and gentle in those days; she really cared for her mistress, in spite of all she had said to Charity, and the thought of her dying was too solemn

for her. So the two nursemaids worked well together, the younger one beginning to respect and cling to the elder as she had never done before.

"As the mistress is so much better, Charity, you might as well take the children out again!" Patty had noticed the white cheeks and heavy eyes the workhouse girl was carrying about, and so kindly thought a breath of fresh air would do her good. So once more the usual morning walk began to be taken.

At last, one fair bright noon, Charity was accosted by Donavon, looking seedier and poorer than ever. He spoke of everything to her,—about his having lost his employment, and of how dark his prospects lay before him! Charity felt very sorry for the man, and her look of interested sympathy emboldened him once more to suggest the subject of "losing" Ivy. "Only for a little while, Charity Moore, and I would take such care of her."

They were passing the row of shrubs planted inside the square, and, unknown to the two, the appeal was heard by a walker inside the railing. Patty, from the nursery window, had seen Donavon

join Charity, and having a talk with her. The baby being safely asleep in its cradle, she popped on her bonnet and ran down into the enclosure. She heard Donavon speaking of a before-mentioned scheme, but she did not hear Charity's indignant, angry refusal. She could not make out what the man wanted to do, but it was enough to set her on the alert. *Now* she had Charity in her power, and she would watch her; all the strata of ill-feeling which had been lying in Patty's heart came to the front again, left visible by the ebb of the tide of kindliness.

Next day Charity was sent on a message to the chemist's for a prescription to be made up. The man was some time compounding it, and the girl lifted the baby Sybil into her arms, leaving the perambulator on the steps.

"How pitty! Cherry, look, look!" Ivy's little fingers pointed delightedly to the blue and red bottles in the window, through which the sun shone brilliantly.

The bright reflection fell in chequers on the doorstep, and Ivy pattered to the door to stand in the "pitty" glow.

Outside stood Donavon, and in his hand a stick

of pink and white candy. He held this out enticingly to the little one.

In another moment Ivy had crossed the threshold confidingly and trustingly, and then, only an instant, she was in his arms, and the stick had reached her crimson lips; before the look of wonder could be exchanged for a cry Donavon had darted down a side street and was gone.

Five minutes after, a distracted figure, in a brown dress, with a baby asleep in her arms, flew wildly along the road. Passers-by stopped to stare as the girl ran here and there, looking into open doors, behind bales of goods piled in front of shop windows, beside pillars and cornices.

"Ivy! Ivy!" the cry was a tremulous one, and presently a despairing wail brought quite a crowd round her.

"She is lost! what shall I do? what shall I do?"

"Who is lost?" It was one of the medalled commissioners so often seen in Westbourne Grove and elsewhere who asked the question, and it was taken up by a policeman who elbowed his way through the crowd.

"Oh, it's Miss Ivy! she was last there!" pointing down towards the chemist's shop."

"A little girl in a bright blue frock and shoes, with yellow curls?"

It was a lady spoke, and Charity turned eagerly.

"Yes, have you seen her?"

"Only on the step of the shop, but I noticed her pretty little face then."

Charity turned away despairingly. "Will you look for her, sir?"—this to a policeman—"I—I must go home with the baby."

There was a feeling of agony in Charity's heart. Go home without little Ivy! go home without the mother's darling! go home having betrayed her trust! Charity felt her heart must break, and yet she turned her face towards Trevor Square. The policeman detained her a minute to get the child's name, address, and description, and the chemist stopped her as she was passing the door to give her the bottle of medicine, and to restore the empty perambulator.

"Only a child lost," said the expectant crowd. It was too common a thing to excite wonder, and it gradually melted away, while Charity pursued her excited way homewards.

"Lor! what's the matter?" said Patty, open-

ing the door, and catching sight of Charity's distressed tear-stained face, "and where on earth is Miss Ivy?".

Charity stumbled into the bright flower-decked hall, and slipt into a chair.

"What's all this noise about?" It was Mr. Melville's voice, and Mr. Melville himself appeared at the door of the sitting-room. "Really you servants might remember how ill the mistress is."

"Where is Miss Ivy?" It was Patty's voice, shrill and excited, speaking without heeding her master. Charity tottered rather than walked towards him, but the tone was low and scarcely audible in which she said, "She—Miss Ivy—is lost, sir!"

Her master, even in his first moment of surprise and alarm, did not forget the sick wife upstairs. Laying his hand on Charity's arm, and beckoning Patty to follow, he went back into the sitting-room. After the door was shut, he turned towards Charity. "What do you mean, girl? speak out!" The tone was calm in its concentrated anxiety. For a moment Charity was silent. How could she tell the father? but in

another instant she spoke, "I have lost little Miss Ivy, sir!"

"Lost her! Lost my Ivy! Where? when?" Mr. Melville's face turned white, and Charity tried to explain. She told him of how the child strayed after the colours on the shop door, and of how she never saw her afterwards.

Her master listened in silence, but Patty broke in,—

"Now I know what he meant. Master, I heard a man called Donavon, a friend of Charity's, agree with her to do something or other. I know now what it was, Charity Moore! You are a vile wicked girl!"

And then she told her master of how she had heard Charity and the man talking. She did not actually invent as she went along, but in her excitement gave a colouring to the whole affairs, from their first meeting with Donavon to when she heard him speak of some before-mentioned scheme.

This girl, who stood trembling, pale, and defiant before him,—this girl whom his wife had taken out of the workhouse, and had treated so lovingly and tenderly, was an accomplice with

the man who had stolen his child! Mr. Melville's face was fearful to look at in his anger.

He turned to Charity. "Is this true? Nay, I need not ask,—of course you will deny it," for Charity's white lips had opened to speak.

"You leave my house this instant, it is defiled with your presence! Stay, though, I will have the police in! Patty, go upstairs, do not mention this to your mistress. Good God! it would kill her in her present state," and the husband's voice broke—"Charity Moore, if she hears it you will be a murderess!"

Taking up his hat, Mr. Melville left the house by the front door, and Charity was alone.

CHAPTER V.

IVY'S CAPTOR.

"O thou child of many prayers,
Life hath quicksands—life hath snares."

LONGFELLOW.

I HAVE said that Ivy Melville was a very energetic little person. When she found herself seized and carried off by Donavon, for one instant only she acquiesced. Then the sugar stick, paltry bribe! was flung far over her bearer's shoulder, and she herself broke into a shout. She was accustomed to being handled gently and lovingly, but this strange man, with his ragged coat and untidy appearance, did not strike her as "nice" at all.

Then Miss Ivy was a particular little person also, and did not like her clothes gathered all up in a bundle, instead of being neatly spread over the arm. So the little feet in white socks and blue shoes began to kick with all their force,

and Ivy herself to struggle manfully in her captor's arms. Donavon tried to hush her in vain, and the piteous blue eyes looked so appealingly, beaded with tears, and the flower-like face so distressed under the broad-brimmed hat, that he began to feel that passers-by would suspect foul play on his part. Just at this moment a cab passed, and on its box the friendly commissioner to whom Charity had confided her trouble. He had noted down the description of the little stray—and there surely was the very little child in a poor man's arms!

Job Browne was off in another instant, quite forgetting that the cab had been ordered to take up a lady at Whiteley's who was in a hurry. Donavon felt his shoulder touched.

"I say! what are you doing with that child?" Michael looked at Job's stalwart frame and at the medals glittering on his breast! He himself in his half-starved condition was in no form to defy the ex-soldier.

"What's that to you?" he said, half sulkily.

"Nothing much!" and Job's brown eyes looked pityingly at the man. "But I heard a little lady dressed like this was lost in Westbourne Grove

—it seems to me you found her!" Donavon thought it best to pretend he had done so.

"To be sure! I found her crying along this street, and was going to take her to the police-station—I couldn't make out her name or address."

"You are going away from your destination, then," answered Job quietly. "I know where she lives, you had better give her to me!"

"For you to claim a reward, I suppose? Not if I knows it—not quite so green!—"Would you not rather come with me, Miss Ivy, than with that horrid nasty man?"

Job Browne noticed the discrepancy between Donavon's first assertion of not knowing the child's name or address and his present calling her by the name she bore, but he made no remark. Ivy soon decided with whom she would go. With all a child's unerring instinct she trusted the brown-eyed, brown-bearded man, and stretched out her hands to Job.

"Bless your little heart!" said the commissioner, setting her on her feet, and stroking down the tossed little petticoats with his great hand; and then, holding the tiny fingers in his, he said to Donavon,—

"Look here, my man! I can see through a stone wall as far as any one! You would, I think, be wiser *not* to take the little 'un home, there might be unpleasant inquiries, you know! I'll take her alone, and whatever little tip I may get—it won't be much, you know, just walking from here with the child—I'll give it to you! I won't tell the parents what I'm pretty sure your dodge was—you look seedy and hungry, poor fellow! Meet me at the corner of Queen's Road to-morrow, and I'll hand it over to you. But—don't try it on again, that's all!"

Donavon turned away with a crestfallen air, and Commissioner Browne began striding towards Trevor Square. His knowledge of child nature, learnt in the barrack-room, and not in family life (for Job was an unmarried man), made him not offer to carry Ivy. Contentedly she trotted by his side, but the little legs were short and the way long for them! Presently the dimpled arms were stretched up towards the blue-braided coat. "Take me up," was the peremptory order. Job stooped, and somehow Ivy sat quite happily on the strong arms, playing with his medals—"pitty money," as she called them.

Mr. Melville was turning into the Square with a couple of policemen when he saw the Commissioner standing on the steps with a little figure tucked up in his arms.

"Isn't that the child?" said policeman No. I.; and Ivy answered by stretching out her arms, and giving a joyous shout, "Dada! dada!"

In another moment his arms were clasping his recovered treasure. She had never been so dear to him as now, for "She was lost and is found! Thank God! thank God! my little darling."

The policemen and Commissioner Browne followed Mr. Melville into the dining-room. "Tread softly," he whispered, remembering the unconscious wife who had been spared all this anxiety and pain. When the door was shut he turned to Job, "Where did you find her?" In answer he narrated the story, suppressing the fact that he had no doubt Donavon had abstracted the child. Remembering his promise, he gave a natural colouring to the man's taking her to the station, and Mr. Melville listened. He had wrongly suspected poor Charity then; the child had really been lost. He felt very much ashamed of himself. His hard words to the poor girl grew in his

memory till he felt he must make her a public apology. Dismissing the policemen, he kept the Commissioner for a few moments and rang the bell.

Patty answered, who gave a scream of delight at seeing little Ivy.

"Send Charity Moore here," said her master, interrupting her genuine transports.

In less than a moment Patty returned. "She is not upstairs, sir; I will look in the kitchens." But Charity was not to be found, high and low, in every room, even at the risk of disturbing Mrs. Melville, peeping into her chamber,—no, in there sat the old nurse, but she had not seen Charity.

In the nursery Patty had been taking care of Sybil, but no Charity had been there. In the kitchen cook was basting meat, but no Charity.

"She's run away, that's what she's done." It was Commissioner Browne who said this—"poor girl!"

"Poor girl indeed!" groaned Mr. Melville, covering his face with his hands; "I threatened her with the police, this is the end of it."

"Well! now, what friends had she about here? tell me, sir—I am at your service, and can go and hunt them up."

Patty answered, "She knew no one, sir; came from the work'us, and had made no friends at all."

"Most likely she's gone back to the work-house then," said Job cheerily. "Good-bye, little missie," taking up his cap. Ivy lifted her face, and the man kissed it almost reverently. "She's 'most an angel," he muttered to himself.

But the people at St. Kevin's had not seen Charity Moore. "Some people get so high and mighty," said the matron, "they forget those who have been kind to them. Charity has never been here but once since she left."

Job thought to himself he did not much wonder at that, if the same vinegar face and harsh voice greeted her,—he considered it enough "to turn milk sour," but answered briskly, "Will you tell her, ma'am, if she does turn up, that the little lady has been found, and is all right?" The matron was eager to hear what had been wrong, but Job, acting "under orders," would not reveal anything.

The next few days were occupied in searching for the girl, but in vain. No trace, no tidings, could be heard. Job Browne met Donavon at

Queen's Road at the time appointed, handing him the money given by Mr. Melville for the purpose. He mentioned that now the nursemaid was lost, and Michael's look of genuine surprise convinced him that *he*, at any rate, knew nothing of this second disappearance. When they parted at the corner, Donavon walked away out of Charity's life, and out of this story. What became of him no one knows. Perhaps he pursued the downward career until the end. Perhaps not. Time drew a veil over his future life.

Mrs. Melville very rapidly got better, but as yet her husband had not told her of Charity's flight. One day, however, as she was half-sitting, half-lying in an easy chair in her dressing-room, adjoining her own one, she heard Ivy's voice raised. Now Mrs. Melville could not bear to see her little daughter in a passion, or hear her cry, without finding out the cause. Walking slowly to the door, she opened it. Outside was Patty, trying in vain to entice the little maiden out of her mother's hearing.

"We wants Cherry, me does! go 'long, Patty, I hate you!"

"Ivy, come here." It was Mrs. Melville's quiet

voice. "My little girl is in a great passion, and saying wicked things." Patty turned in consternation, in time to see Ivy run to her mother. "Me does want Cherry, pretty mama!"

"Patty, tell Charity to come down here! where is she that she does not hear Miss Ivy?" and the mother drew her little girl back into the room. Patty stood aghast, then with quick steps ran down to the master's room.

"The mistress is asking after Charity, sir, and is quite vexed she does not come." The time had come. Mr. Melville put away the papers he was studying, locked his desk, and strode upstairs.

"Charity, where have you been all this time?" Mrs. Melville spoke without turning her head, supposing the door was opened to admit her nursemaid.

"It is not Charity, darling." It was her husband's voice, but with a tone of indecision blended with it.

"Oh! Richard, I ought to have known your step. But I sent for Charity to take Ivy away, and thought it must be she. Pull the bell, dear, and she will be up in a moment."

Mrs. Melville was looking tired already with

the restless little girl sitting in her lap. Her husband lifted Ivy up, and going to the door gave her to Patty, who stood outside.

Then his hesitating feet brought him again to his wife's chair, and he leaned over the back.

"What have you to say? I know you have a confession to make!" said Dorothy, smiling at him.

He plunged into it then—described the loss of Ivy, Patty's narrative, his own harsh words, and then the natural end to the adventure. His wife heard him to the end. "Richard, how could you? and my poor Charity! you have heard nothing since?"

"Nothing," answered Mr. Melville; "don't excite yourself, dear! we have done all we could."

"Don't excite myself, with *that* girl lost! How could you suspect her, Richard? Could she, who had so nobly saved Ivy, *sell* her in the mean way you thought?"

"It seems to me Patty is the most to blame." It was Mr. Melville, who in the usual manner of weak men was shielding himself from her indignation. Dorothy's lips curled.

"Somewhat, perhaps—but *you*, Richard, *you*

taunted her with being almost a murderess! My poor Charity! and threatening her with the police, and would not even hear her defence. If only I had been up and well!"

There was silence for a few minutes, and then she stretched out her hand frankly to her husband. "Forgive me; Richard! my excitement led me away! You did, of course, as you thought right; but now, with God's help, we must do the best we can to find Charity!"

CHAPTER VI.

HOMELESS.

"I see thee passing without mortal harm
Through ranks of foes against thy safety met:
I see thee passing, thy defence and charm
The seal of God upon thy forehead set."

TRENCH.

IN the meantime, what had become of Charity? When Mr. Melville left her in the sitting-room, she stood almost stunned for a moment. His angry biting words came back—"murderess" and "police" rang over and over in her bewildered brain—while little Ivy was lost! Patty had spoken against her, had caused her much of this trouble. What was she to do? Unlike most London girls, Charity had a keen dread of the police. Brought up in the workhouse, where their blue uniform only came to bring strays and waifs, she had a great fear of them inculcated. As a child the "p'lice" had been held up to her as ready to pounce down on every offender, and hale

them away to prison. Awful stories of their sagacity and ferocity had been retailed into her shrinking ear, until she feared them more than anything. Her only two encounters with them—when the burly officer had gripped her arm after saving Ivy's life, and the harsh voice of the man who had made enquiries about Ivy's loss—had not been so terrible after all! But in that hour of dismay and terror all Charity's early remembrances were called into play.

The master had said at first, "Leave the house," and so Charity would that instant. There was no time for her to think what she was doing, no time for the sob in her throat to develop into tears. The police might be there after her in a few minutes! Charity took her purse out of her pocket, the purse that had held so little all her life. It contained five shillings; one halfcrown she took out and laid with the medicine bottles on the table—it had been given her to spend on new gloves for Ivy; the second she sent back into the purse. It was her own, given her by her mistress some time before—her sweet golden-haired mistress!

Charity only wished there were time to see her

once more, but there was not—the police might be at the house in a few seconds. Then, with one last loving look round the room, a glance up the well-known stairs, a hand laid for a moment on the perambulator in the hall, a kiss pressed on a little cap of Ivy's hanging on a peg, and Charity was gone—gone! from the happy big house which had been her only home—gone, into the "wide, wide world."

It is useless to try and explain away the unreasoning terror which filled Charity's heart, a terror which for the time being overpowered even her love for her mistress, and swallowed up her anxiety about Ivy!

It was as strong as it was unreasoning, and drove her forth as inexorably as any whip of justice could have done. I think the step she took was founded on a strong substrata of injustice. Her master had condemned without hearing, condemned the innocent—afterwards Charity had time to think of this. At present it had no place in her brains; the slim figure in its grey dress, the neat shawl and hat, attracted no remarks as Charity flitted up one street and down another. Presently she came out on the Kensal Road, over

the muddy canal, looking calm and tranquil under the summer sky. Past the gasworks, belching forth steam and smoke, round the mounds of dust and rubbish on which squalid children played—past the huge iron gates of the cemetery, where the graves gleamed white and peaceful amid the green trees.

On, on, she went, until the streets gave way to more straggling roads, until the long rows of brick houses were replaced by hedges of verdant green, until the graceful elms watched over the pathway instead of sentinel gas-lamps.

The busy summer day was merging into soft twilight when Charity stopped, worn out. She had been too hurried before to notice the green fields and fragrant hedgerows, but as she stopped at last to rest the town-bred child drank in all its beauty with dilating eyes.

Behind her was the distant city, illumined and transfigured by the setting sun into a dream-land of glorified minarets and domes. In front stretched a green pasture land, on which a herd of dappled cows were being driven home. At her side rippled a little rill of pure fresh water. Overhead trembled and rustled the branches of

huge trees. How beautiful it would all be if she were not quite alone! Charity started at the thought—alone? no, not quite. Like the echo of some refrain came the well-known words, "Lo, I am with you alway"—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Charity bowed her head: "Lord Christ! take care of me this night!"

As if in direct answer to the childlike prayer, a party of people came up at this minute, some respectable-looking girls evidently out for a holiday, and a middle-aged matron. The kindly look on the sensible face of the latter made Charity address her timidly.

"If you please, ma'am, could you tell me where I could get a bed for the night?"

"To be sure I can, my girl! The 'Harvest Home' isn't far from here, and though I says it as shouldn't, you couldn't find a more respectable lodging or comfortable bed anywhere."

"True for you, Mrs. Irons!" said one of the girls, "no other place could boast of such a shilling'sworth!"

Mrs. Irons looked pleased at the compliment, and then addressed Charity again.

"If ye wants a bed, you'd better come along

wi' me, it ain't respectable for a young girl like you to be loitering about the roads."

It was a very weary body that Charity's tired feet dragged into the snug little hostel called the "Harvest Home." Mrs. Irons took quite a fancy to the poor little waif, with her pathetic white face and patient eyes.

"They look like a dumb animal's," she said, and though Charity refused any supper, being too weary and exhausted to eat, she found her way into the little bedroom with a cup of steaming coffee in her hands—"Drink this! there's a good lass!" she said in a motherly way, "it will do you all the good in the world."

Charity would not do so until she had shown that her last—and first, poor child!—coin was a half-crown. As it lay in the trembling hand Mrs. Irons felt a tear come into her eyes. "This is a present, my poor child!" she said; "you will pay me for your bed in the morning, but as you didn't order any eatables, of course you needn't pay for 'em."

Charity was sufficiently acquainted with the world's ways to be sure that this was an uncommon way for landladies to behave, but

innocent enough about money transactions to believe a compromise Mrs. Irons proposed, "You let one o' them young gels downstairs share your bed, and we'll be even then." Good Mrs. Irons! surely in a day that is coming you will hear the words in the Master's voice, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

The weather had changed the next morning, when Charity opened her eyes. The view from the little lattice window was obscured by a dense wall of rain and mist. She dressed and went downstairs, where she heard Mrs. Irons' voice. It was speaking sharply, yet cheerily.

"Whiskey does he want? at this time o' day too! Then he ought to be ashamed o' himself. No, Farmer Bates, no beer or any such beastly stuff is sold in this inn to turn the Harvest Home into a pigsty! No, thank the Lord, we have got on without whiskey or brandy or beer all these years, and never over here will ye get it. But I can gi'e him the best cup o' cocoa or coffee *he* ever tasted in his life, as *you* can vouch for, Farmer!"

A slight altercation here went on between two

low-toned voices, and then a reply was shouted back by a pair of stentorian lungs—"All right, Mother Irons, hurry up with the cocoa."

Mrs. Irons was bustling to the coffee room when she caught sight of Charity. "Here, child!" she said, "fry some bacon for yon gentleman's breakfast." Charity willingly began, but soon the landlady saw she was not used to cooking, and good-naturedly pushed her aside. "Sit down there till I can attend to you."

Charity had been trained in habits of obedience, and waited patiently until Farmer Bates and his companion had devoured enough fry to satisfy six ordinary mortals, and then Mrs. Irons came and sat down by her side.

"My dear," she said, "excuse an old woman's curiosity, but how do you happen to be travelling alone?"

Charity looked at the pleasant motherly face, and then the brown, cropped head was laid on the motherly breast.

She told her—part of her story, but in her loyalty to the Melvilles did not mention names or places.

"So your master spoke harsh and rough to

you, poor girl! and hadn't you done what he thought?"

Charity lifted her head, and the grey eyes looked stedfastly and unflinchingly at Mrs. Irons. "I had done wrong, but not the bad thing he thought."

Mrs. Irons listened to the fresh, earnest young voice, and looking in the brave determined face felt she spoke the truth. Though she knew nothing of Charity's life beyond the rude sketch of her being taken from the workhouse by kindly hands, and then being turned from her home with harsh words, she yet was sure the girl before her was capable of brave endurance and true self-sacrifice.

"God bless the child!" she muttered, as she swept up the remnants of the breakfast they had been taking together.

Presently again she spoke. "Look here, Charity Moore"—she had told her name—"don't you think of stirring out this fearful wet day: if you's a nursemaid you know how to stitch and darn! I have a heap o' things to mend—stay you and help! Them giddy girls that came last night were off back to London ere the sun shone."

So Charity stayed that day, and the next, in

the haven opened for her. She darned Mrs. Irons' tablecloths so finely that that worthy dame had to put on her gold-rimmed spectacles to find the threads. She patched a jacket, and refurbished an ancient bonnet till it was "quite the fashion." She turned, cut, and hemmed dusters, dishcloths, and what not.

For four days she stayed in the "Harvest Home," and when she set out again it was with five shillings in her little purse.

"You have done ever so much more than your board was worth," insisted Mrs. Irons, "and I'd like to keep to you always—but you see the things are mended now, and ye can't cook!"

"Very well," said Charity; "you have been very, very good to me, Mrs. Irons, and now I must go on—I shall soon find work to do."

Tears dimmed the gold-rimmed glasses as she took leave of the worthy landlady.

"If ever you're passing this way, Charity Moore, let's hear how you're getting on.

"God bless her, the poor child!" she added, as Charity's figure disappeared in a flash of sunlight in the distance. "God bless her and help her!"

Charity's next venture, and the next, were not

successful. No one would take work in lieu of payment, and her little store soon diminished into nothing. Five shillings soon melt away in a night's lodging and a couple of meals a day, though the meals may only be bread.

Charity's heart began to fail, and at last, one morning, as she knelt beside the coarse bed on which she had last slept, her cry, "Give us *this* day our daily bread," was an almost despairing one. Her last sixpence would only pay for the night's rest, and hungry, and without breaking her fast, she went forth, stumbling along through that day without food. Night was drawing her sombre veil over cottage roof and cathedral spire as Charity came near the outskirts of a large town. There seemed to have been some sort of fair held there that day, for cartloads of burly farmers, with their buxom wives and rosy-cheeked children, were driving along the road.

The little ones, sleepy and tired out, were leaning back wearily, with some coveted toy treasure in their sticky little hands.

The hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked pedestrian did not attract any attention as she slowly pursued her way with a keen sense of the difference.

Charity noticed the happy family parties, in contrast to her own forlorn, unhappy little self. Her thoughts winged back to the cosy nursery, in which she had so lately been happily sheltered.

With tears in her eyes she thought of little Ivy, laughing Sybil, and the wee new baby. She had not a shadow of doubt but that the little wanderer was safe back in her guarded home, safe back in the mother's loving arms. She imagined to herself how the round, golden head would be laid on the pillow, and just going to sleep. She stretched out her arms, and a longing unspoken cry went out from her heart—"Think of me sometimes, darling!" She did not know that at that moment a tiny white-robed figure was kneeling at her mother's knees, that two dimpled little hands were being laid together, that the sweet baby voice was lisping, "God keep poor Cherry safe, and bring her back to Ivy, for Jesus' sake."

But God could see the two, and the prayer was registered in His own book, part of it to be answered now, the rest in His own time—

"Keep Cherry safe, for Jesus' sake."

It was surely in answer to this that an unseen

guide with shining wings was sent to lead poor footsore Charity into the market square, where the booths and tents were already being taken down. "Cheap Jacks" were packing up their multifarious wares, "tinkers" putting out their charcoal stoves, fish-vendors rolling up the unsavoury morsels left in cool green grass, flower merchants carefully covering their fragile blooms, while far above the tall spire of the cathedral church lifted its finger towards the deep blue star-spangled sky.

Charity found her way to a heap of straw spread under a huge waggon, and with a sense of utter weariness lay down on it.

As she lay, the big tears began coursing down her cheeks. She was so helpless, so friendless!

"Are you hungry?" The question was asked abruptly in the shrillest voice imaginable, by the queerest little mortal Charity had ever seen. The ragged tinsel frock and the wild black locks, the white shoes and gauze wings, made the girl think the questioner was from another world. But the question was repeated, and Charity answered slowly, "I am very hungry."

"ARE YOU HUNGRY?"

Page 76.

The sprite broke off a lump of bread and butter and passed it to the wanderer, who seized and ate it almost voraciously.

"Have some more?" was asked encouragingly, and Charity nodded. Presently she was satisfied, and then her Good Samaritan began questioning her.

"Say, where do you come from? What's your name? Charity?—well, *that's* queer, at all events.

"I'm called 'Hangelina' on the stage, off it I'm 'Sal.' I'm an angel, you know!" Charity opened her eyes. "Father keeps this 'ere caravan. He's awful good to me is father, 'cept when he's in drink, which ain't so very often, and gives me whole lots to eat. My! but sometimes we 'ave fine vittles. Have some more?"

She broke off abruptly, seeing Charity had finished her last clunch of bread.

"Well, you *were* hungry! wait a bit. If the kettle's boiling we'll 'ave some tea together."

So saying, the figure skipped up the steps of a covered waggon near, and disappeared in the interior.

Charity looked after her puzzled. Was she child or woman? The wizened face might belong

to any age almost, but the height and make were like a child of ten.

"Come up here." Sal had appeared at the door and beckoned. Charity ascended the steps. A fragrant odour of tea filled the low little apartment, which was so dimly lighted by a "dip" that nothing was to be seen but just the centre of a table, on which were laid a couple of cups.

"I ain't got no milk, but I daresay you are in no ways particular."

Charity shook her head, and the boiled peculiar beverage proved very grateful to her parched throat.

"How old are you?" questioned her hostess, who had been taking stock of the visitor. "Sixteen? Why, I'm nigh as old as that! I shall be fifteen come next March. What's your line o' profession now?" Charity smiled, the bread and tea had put new life into her.

"I'm looking out for work! I'm not particular what I do."

The small elf-like head was held on one side, while Sal pursed up her lips and gazed at the face before her.

"I like your phiz, that I do, my dear, and if father lets me, I'd as lief have you as companion as any one else. You see father likes me to have some one. Ever since mother went gallavanting off, I have had to have some gal or other with me. Why, there was Poll, she didn't stay long, 'cos she got drunk, and Alice, she was too fine a lady, and wanted fresh butter every day. Then Phœbe! she were a poor stick o' a thing, and I didn't like her. Do you think you'd like to go round wi' us?"

Charity gazed round the room. Her eyes were getting accustomed to the smoke, and she noticed it was cared for. A little red curtain hung before the window, and another was drawn across a corner of the place. Sal continued to enlighten her. "We 'as this 'ere room all to ourselves. Father, he comes and takes 'is meals, but sleeps in t'other caravan wi' the other men. I'm fearful lonesome at times!"

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. A tone in the "angel's" shrill voice went to Charity's heart.

"I will stay, Sal!" and so the compact was sealed.

It was a strange life on which Charity had entered. She was roused the next morning by the jolt of the heavy waggon over the stones of a country road. Sal was already up, and Charity could hear the clatter of a broom at the other side of the red curtain. She jumped up and dressed in as much privacy as if she had been a lady in her boudoir, and then knelt down by the little bed. Sal had heard her moving, and presently the black rough head was thrust through the curtain. "What air she after?" was her thought at seeing the quiet figure kneeling, with her face hidden. However, the bustle of greeting her new companion, and setting her to work, prevented her making any enquiry when Charity came from behind the curtain, with a calm, happy look on her face.

Presently the jolting stopped, and Sal opened the door. The fresh morning air, the green leaves sparkling with dew, the caw of rooks, and the twitter of hedge-sparrows, showed they were in the country.

"Well, my gal," said an honest, hearty voice, as Sal's father came up the steps and through the open door, "so *you* are to be my darter's

companion ?" and then no more was said, and Charity settled down to her new position.

It was not an unhappy one. The strange, black, neglected "angel" turned out to be a quiet, easily led child. The father had an occasional "bout," but generally managed to keep out of the girls' way when tipsy. He much dreaded the sharp tongue and withering sarcasm the "angel" then bestowed upon him. When he was sober, however, a kinder though rough companion there could not have been. Now and then they stopped at some country town, when the tinsel dress and gauze wings were donned, and Sal acted her part in a drama in the other waggon.

One evening, Sal and Charity sat on the settle by the little stove. The former began cross-questioning her companion. "Charity, what *was* you doing when you was poking on your knees ?"

Charity opened her big grey eyes. "Why, don't you know, Sal ? I was saying my prayers."

"What's them ?" enquired the little heathen. Here was *work* for Charity to do. Tenderly and simply she tried to explain to Sal what prayer was—"Just asking our Father for what we want."

"But I ain't seen no one around when you was kneeling."

"You can't *see* God," said Charity; and Sal interrupted her—"In course I know that. But you didn't say you was praying to God, you said talking to yer Father."

"So I was, Sal; my mistress used to say that God *is* our Father—I wish she was here to explain."

"Tell me what *she* said," said Sal, who had a peculiar pleasure in stories of all sorts, and more especially when told in Charity's gentle voice.

So Charity told her as well as she was able. "I wish I had a Bible, Sal, for then I could read you all about Jesus. It's such a lovely story!"

So at the next town they came to Sal slipped out with a shilling in her pocket, and came back triumphantly with a large type Bible in her hand.

"There you are, now read me them stories." So Charity did. By the light of the dim dip candle she read of the Saviour's life and death, of His birth and burial, and Sal listened attentively. It was all news to her, and she pondered over "yon little Babby in the stables," wept over Calvary,

took to heart all the accusations brought against the Lord in His earthly life, and waxed indignant with His persecutors.

So the old, old story was told again in that travelling waggon. By degrees Sal began to kneel by her bed. By degrees she ceased to use bad language. By degrees she learnt to spell out the wondrous narrative, and then, "like a little child," she believed it.

CHAPTER VII.

FOUND.

"Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite beyond it,
Blooms the garden that I love."

ALL the search made for Charity Moore from the big house in Trevor Square proved unavailing. Commissioner Browne came and went, willing and helpful. A reward was offered to any one who could say where she was, but in vain! Mr. Melville at last gave up all hope of ever seeing the workhouse girl again, and Mrs. Melville even was brought to see that all had been done that was possible to track the strange girl, but she did not give up *hope*, though abandoning the search. Every night and morning Ivy was taught to pray for Charity, and her mother firmly believed that some time or other her little handmaiden would be found. "According to your faith be it unto you."

"Dorothy! I think you ought to go to the country for awhile,—you are not looking strong, and the children's cheeks are pale."

It was a hot close day towards the end of August that Mr. Melville thus spoke to his wife. Her heart sprang up with a bound as she thought of the cool green fields and fragrant meadows of her old home, and her mother had written, pressing her to go to the old manor for awhile. How the children would enjoy it! Mr. Melville was rewarded with the brightest of smiles and most loving of looks.

So some white messengers passed between the two houses, the tall many-storied London dwelling and the old-fashioned rambling country mansion. Preparations went on rapidly, and very soon Dorothy with her children and nursemaid took their places in the train which was to whirl them westward.

Patty was still in the place of trust. She still "minded" the little girls. Mrs. Melville had spoken seriously and gravely to her about her jealous suspicions of Charity, and all they gave rise to.

"Every Sunday, Patty, we pray to be delivered

from 'envy, hatred, and malice.' You see how your envy made you hate poor Charity, and then malice,—wicked unkind deeds followed." Patty listened, and though excusing herself (perhaps not unjustly) to her own satisfaction, she promised amendment for the future.

"G'anma" met the travellers at the portico of the old grey house—a sweet white-haired old lady, with tulle cap fastened under her chin, and with a placid smile on her fair face. She lovingly kissed her own pretty golden-haired daughter, and then two shy little faces were lifted up, and lastly the baby, sleeping in Patty's arms, had a share in her greeting.

"We's so *glad* to be here, G'anma!" It was Ivy said this, a little while after, shy no longer—"and me will love you!" So they made themselves at home, and this is part of a letter written by his wife to Mr. Melville:—

"The children are so happy here! I wish you could see them trotting everywhere, with *such* brown faces and hands; that little rogue Ivy is in every mischief, but occupies, I strongly suspect, the first place in 'G'anma's' heart. By the way, Richard, mother wants a steady, cheerful,

industrious man about the place—old Rogers is too old to work! At once I thought of cheery Job Browne. Do you think he would come here? Have you heard nothing about poor Charity? 'Je vive en espoir' *still.*"

Mr. Melville shrugged his shoulders over his wife's faith, and then set off on his earliest opportunity to put the mentioned proposal before Job Browne. He found the commissioner in a close little lodging over a livery stable. He listened to the proposal with wide-open wondering eyes, and then asked for a couple of days to consider it. However, that same night, brisk and spruce as ever, Job appeared at Trevor Square.

"I've been thinking of it, sir; I'll take the situation if I suit"—and then in explanation —"You see, sir, them mews *are* very nigh my room, and I have no ties to bind me to Burlington Stables. The place *is* hot in summer, and I often longs for a whiff of the real country air."

Job's acceptance went down to the manor house in Mr. Melville's letter, and in another day he had packed up his simple possessions, and went off into the midlands.

"My dear, that man is the very one I wanted,"

said old Mrs. Carpenter to her daughter; and Mrs. Melville quoted laughingly, "Yes, truthful, quick, and honest, as per advertisement, mother."

Ivy was quite satisfied, too, to have her old admirer to carry her about, pick strawberries and fruit for her, saddle the patient donkey half-a-dozen times a day, and swing the little lady in her big swing on the oak tree. Job was a slave to all her whims and caprices, and in return she regarded him with more affection than any-one else.

"It's really too bad, Dorothy!" Mrs. Carpenter looked flurried and bothered, as she came into the old oak-panelled parlour one morning. "Here is this fair coming off on Monday, and all the servants are wild to be allowed to go! Job is the only sensible one, and says he is too old to care for such things!"

Mrs. Melville looked up from the little socks she was knitting for the baby on her knee and smiled.

"Never mind, mother. If Job takes care of the little tyrant Ivy, I can manage Sybil and baby!"

"It isn't only that, but we are pestered all day

with these cheap Jacks of people coming up about the house! You hardly remember them, I suppose, Dorothy, but they were always great torments to me, even when *you* were almost as small as that young man there."

"Poor little mother! I am afraid it's an evil that can't be cured. Patty wants to go too. Never mind, we'll have a nice quiet day together."

So that Saturday, an extra scrub was given to the front doorsteps, already spotless in their purity, an additional polish to the brass rails and knobs, more cakes and pies were baked than usual, and double work crowded in, to leave the maids free for their Monday holiday.

The morning service in the old church, with the earnest reading of the vicar, and the monotonous chanting of the village choir, had passed. The early dinner, with its tempting array of fruit, had been partaken of, and then "G'anma," Dorothy, and her children went out to the lawn. A Bible was clasped in "mudder's" hand, while little Ivy carried a big book of "Picture Stories."

"That'll do," she commenced, thumping the book on a rustic seat, just out of sight of the windows. "Now!" and her Sunday treat of

opening it, and describing the gorgeously-coloured illustrations began.

"Dat's Dan'el in de lions' den—look, Sybil! aren't he a bwave man?" and she stroked the picture lovingly. "Me loves you, Dan'el in de lions' den. Dis big fish is Jonah in de whale! and here's poor ickle Joseph and his bad brodders! Dis is ickle Boy Jesus in Church! You an't been to Church yet, Sybil, 'cos you too 'ittle; but some day you'll go. You must not talk there, Sybil! Jesus did though. But He was a dood ickle Boy, and we'se baddy." And so the little voice rambled on, while her tiny sister looked at the pictures, and was content to nod her head when Ivy spoke of "dood mens," or to thump the "bads" in imitation of her elder's energetic treatment.

Presently the big book was laid on Mrs. Melville's knee, and a wee finger pointed to a miserable-looking man, surrounded by broken pots. "Is de pore man crying becos' he broke de jugs, mudder?"

There was a smile on Dorothy's face. "No, darling, that is a picture of Job. He was a very good man, and he is crying because God took

away his little girls and boys from him, and all his money."

Ivy looked puzzled, and a moment after, seeing Browne passing the gate, she ran to it, and called him. "Open the gate," she said, in her peremptory way, "and come here."

The tall brown-bearded man meekly obeyed. "Go on your knees, Mr. Job," said his little mistress, and then she put her arms round his neck. "I are *so* sorry, Mr. Job, dat God took all your ickle boys and girls from you! but you's not like your picture in de book, Mr. Job, your hair isn't quite so long, and you good man to cut your whisgues."

Honest Job Browne was fairly puzzled, and Mrs. Melville had to come to the rescue and explain. Then she said, "Ivy, you may go with Job now," and holding his big hand her little daughter trotted away.

They walked together down the long drive under the chestnut trees, and when they came to the gate, Ivy stopped and peered through the bars. Soon she insisted on Job's opening it for her, and ran on to the dusty road. Two figures were coming down from the village at that moment,

one black-haired and dark-faced, the other with bright eager eyes and curly hair, in a plain bonnet tied under the sweet face.

Suddenly there was a rush, and Sal beheld Charity on her knees in the middle of the road, with her bonnet pushed backward, and heard her cry lovingly and softly, "My Ivy! my little Ivy, don't you know me?"

For one moment the dainty little lady drew her white frock and blue sash from the encircling arms; in another, a pair of dimpled arms were flung round the curly head, and a pair of soft lips rested on the broad forehead, while with a cooing sound the little voice said, "Dear Charity!"

Brown and Sal looked on from either side of the road in utter amazement. Charity with shining eyes and flushed face got up with Ivy still clinging round her neck, and the little girl called out, "Come here, Mr. Job! dis is my Charity what I lost."

So *this* was Charity at last. Over Job's face swept a tumult of feeling. How glad his mistress would be! How thankful all of them!

Charity looked round in fright as he came towards her: was she to be taken up after all?

The friendly voice soon reassured her. "Mrs. Melville will be main glad to see you," he said; "we looked everywhere for you. She knows it weren't your fault," he hastily added, with quick tact, noticing the shade on Charity's face.

She shrank back from following Job, and putting Ivy down she was about turning away, but the child was too quick for her. In answer to Job's quiet "Bring her, Miss Ivy," the wee hand was slipped into the girl's—"You must come 'long wi' me, Charity."

For a moment more she wavered, but who could resist the pleading little face and clinging hands? Not Charity, and so the trio walked up to the manor house. Charity's heart was in a tumult. It must be a dream after all, and she would wake to find herself in the caravan. She would wake to see the little form beside her vanish into space, to hear the echo of the sweet voice mocking her dream.

But little Ivy went trotting on, while Commissioner Browne strode alongside, and Charity followed obediently. If it were a dream, she wished it could last for ever.

There was a cry "Mudder, here's my Charity!"

and in another moment, yes,—actually her mistress's arms were round her, and Mrs. Melville's lips rested on her little handmaiden's forehead.

"How could you treat me so?" said Dorothy, recovering herself after a while, and looking reproachfully at the girl, whom she regarded with such affection as the saviour of her little daughter's life.

But it was afterwards that Charity told her all about it—*now* she was almost dumb with surprise and shyness. Here was Job Browne looking on, and a white-haired old lady, to whom she curtsied, and whom the children called "G'anma." Here was Patty, with flaming cheeks, standing a little apart. There the wee baby, not *quite* so pink as she remembered him, lying in the sun. Here was her own sweet-faced mistress, so glad to see her back; and here, above all, was energetic little Ivy, clasping her knees for fear she should go away again.

For awhile she forgot "the angel" left so suddenly and wonderingly, and with a touch of compunction she started up. "Thank you kindly, ma'am, now I must go back to Sal, she will be waiting for me."

Charity in her self-sacrifice was going to turn her back upon the paradise opened to her. She thought of no heroism when she spoke of saying good-bye to those she loved most dearly on earth. She was content to have seen them, and now to return to the dusty little caravan. But others noticed it. Mrs. Melville felt the tears come into her eyes, and Job Browne gazed softly at the young girl.

"Yes, dear, go, but only to say good-bye; you must come here at once, Charity."

"Oh, but, ma'am, poor Sal!" said her nurse, with a gulp of remorse at having forgotten her for a short time. "I couldn't leave her all at once!"

So before Charity went, her mistress consented to let her sleep the night with her companion. "But come werry early!" shouted Ivy after her through the gate.

Charity had hard work to pacify "the angel" when she got back. She was worse than all her other "gals" in Sal's eyes, because she was leaving of her own free will.

"Oh, but, Sal," said Charity reproachfully, "you know I really *belong* to Mrs. Melville. I

am sorry to leave you, dear," and a hand stole round the sallow neck. After the black locks were straying over her arm, she could go on better.

"But you are not so lonely as you were, for you have your Bible now, Sal, and you can talk to 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' You'll soon get another nice friend too, instead of me." The "angel's" sobs were boisterous.

"Never again, Charity, never no more friends for me—oh, don't go away!"

With a sigh Charity tried to see if it would be *right* for her to continue this vagrant life with Sal. Perhaps it might be.

"If you think me ungrateful, I will stop with you."

Immediately the other girl's generous nature broke forth. "No! no! of course you must go."

Then there was quiet a few minutes, while Charity's hand went caressingly backwards and forwards over the rough hair and wet forehead. Then she spoke softly. "Sal! I'm thinking how much our names, yours and mine, ought to teach us. Now when I *hear* myself called Charity, I always think o' that charity we read about the other night, do you remember?"

"I AM SORRY TO LEAVE YOU, DEAR." [*Page* 96.

"I remember hearing you read of a charity (like you), who was kind." Sal spoke intelligently, and her companion smiled.

"Not like me, but what I want to be, Sally,—'suffereth long and is kind, envieth not,'—it reminds me of all that. Then your name! What does it make you think of?"

Sal laughed,—a queer little shrill half-broken laugh.

"My eye! but Sal ain't got no meaning, nor Sally neither, that I knows on; what air you driving at?"

"Haven't you another name? Doesn't your father and all the other men call you 'the angel'? Now you can't have wings growing out o' your shoulders, *real* wings I mean, but you might be an *angel* in other ways. In the Bible there's heaps about angels,—let's see what they did!" Sal sprang up all eagerness, and that quiet Sunday evening was spent in finding out what angels' work was.

It was all rather beyond the uneducated girl, but Charity tried to explain to her as she read in her soft true voice. Sal listened.

"So you see, dear, you have to comfort, like the

angels did the disciples, when Jesus was risen, and you can warn people not to be sinful, like they did Lot; and oh! Sally, one day you will see the angels, and you'll be so like them, your name will quite fit you."

The next morning poor Sally was left behind, possessed with a valiant resolve to be like an angel, and to be worthy of her name, while Charity went back to her old happy life.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNEXPECTED EVENTS.

"Thrice blest, whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure,
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?"

In Memoriam.

"DOES it strike you, Dorothy, that Job Browne seems to think a lot about Charity?"

The speaker was Mr. Melville, and he was addressing his golden-haired wife. She looked up startled.

"Surely not, Richard! Such an idea never entered into my head."

"Where is woman's proverbial quickness, *I* should like to know? It is evident that our 'trusty man' is very much taken with the girl's charms."

"I don't think it can be so at all!" replied

Mrs. Melville decidedly. "Why, Job is old enough nearly to be her father!"

Her husband smiled at the tone of superior knowledge, but having dropped his word of warning, he took up his hat, contented to leave the matter to his wife's discretion.

In spite of her assumption of incredulity, Mrs. Melville sat for some moments after he left the room, absorbed in thought.

Perhaps he was right after all, and if so, what a good thing it would be for the *ci-devant* work-house girl.

It is two years since Charity was lost in London and found again at the old manor house. A peaceful, quiet time it has been, spent between Trevor Square and the country home. Mrs. Carpenter has gone to her long rest, and the old place now belongs to the Melvilles. The winter is still spent in London, where the husband's work mostly lies, but as soon as the buds appear on the trees in the parks, and the daffodils give place to fragrant hawthorn and yellow irisis, there is a general flitting. Boxes are packed, thick shoes bought, shady sun-bonnets tied on, and the whole family come to the pleasant country life.

Patty has left service, having bestowed her blooming cheeks and strong hand upon a thriving mechanic in the smoky metropolis.

Charity still stays on, trusted and loved by her mistress, and adoring the children she has charge of. Job Browne, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up, and with his honest, cheerful face shaded by a huge grass hat, has learnt to wield scythe and spade. He is in a position of great trust at the manor, for when "the family" are in town, he tends the garden, looks after the horses, and takes care of the house.

Mrs. Melville does not know *what* she can do without them in their several places "if they take in their heads to be married!" for Charity certainly must be practically lost to her. She takes a good look at the girl as she sits opposite the windows, on the shady lawn, while the three children scramble round. Good, and true, and trustworthy—that is what the face has written upon it. The shining brown hair is gathered away under a muslin cap with a dainty pink bow on it. It is glossy and tidy, but here and there a stray wave kisses the broad white forehead and prevents any harsh lines showing. The grey eyes

are quiet in their depths, and the mouth has a curve of contentment and happiness on it. "Baby" scrambles up to her lap as Mrs. Melville watches them, and she notices the gentleness with which her handmaiden smoothes the muslin apron, tossed and rumpled by the dusty wee feet.

"She is worthy her name!" her mistress says to herself, "but it is absurd to think of Job being in love with her! why, the child is scarcely nineteen."

Presently the Ex-commissioner Browne himself comes across the garden, and Mrs. Melville is the spectator of an unconscious little idyll in real life! She sees the smile brighten in the man's eyes, while Charity flushes a bright pink, and she endorses her husband's prophecy.

"Well, I will wait and see what happens," she concludes to herself.

It is not long she has to wait either, for about a week after Charity asks to speak to her.

"What is the matter?" There is an amused smile on Mrs. Melville's lips as she scans the bashful face before her.

"Oh! ma'am! Job—Jo-o-b Browne says——"

"Well?" her mistress cruelly takes a delight in hearing the stammer.

"He says—he says, ma'am—" and then with a rush it comes—"he wants to marry me."

"Well! what do you say, Charity?"

"I said I would tell you, ma'am—and if you had no objection—I—I was willing."

"'Barkis is willin','" quoted Mrs. Melville slyly, and then softly she turns to her handmaiden. "Well, my child, if you care for Job it must be all right, and you will be happy, Charity, I am sure, for he is a true, God-fearing man. It will be a great responsibility for you, because Job is so much older, and will expect a good deal from you, Charity! Will you risk it?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well! you are right, I think, and may God bless you both."

Job has his say out, too, to "the master," and Mrs. Melville spoke kindly in congratulation of his "good fortune."

"I think Charity too young just yet!" she said, however. "She is not quite nineteen, Job,—leave her until she has passed her teens, and then you shall have her."

Charity and Job were quite willing to abide by the mistress's decision, and so the happy months went on.

Autumn mists were appearing on the chestnuts, and all preparations had been made for a return to London, when an event happened which changed the course of the lives so closely linked together.

One warm morning a respectably-dressed man rang the bell of St. Kevin's front gate. It clanged wildly and loudly, and the echoes had scarcely ceased reverberating through the stone passages when the door was cautiously opened.

"I want to see the matron." The voice was harsh and loud, but the porter looked uncomprehendingly at the visitor.

"I'm rather hard o' hearing, sir," and the withered hand was put up to shade the dull ear. "It ain't visitin' day, and ye can't see no one."

"I want to see the matron, I tell you!" shouted back the man, in a stentorian voice, the tones reaching even the dull brain of Jenkins, and he stepped back.

"Come in then," and the visitor was marshalled along the cold white-washed corridors into the

committee-room. It was the very same that Mrs. Melville had once waited in, and the stranger sat down in the very chair that lady had occupied.

Though he did not notice the marble busts of former benefactors to St. Kevin's, or the grimy pictures on the walls, still the time passed quicker to him than to the sensitive Mrs. Melville. He was not so impatient as she had been, but his face lighted up eagerly when Mrs. Smithies entered the room, still more magnificent, with her steel bugles and bangles glittering fiercely this sunny morning—with her grey eyes colder and her lips harder than they were four years before.

"Ahem! good morning, ma'am." Mrs. Smithies made a wooden bow. "I have come on delicate business. But before I enter on it, may I ask how long you have been here?"

Mrs. Smithies looked as if it were no business of his, and answered curtly,—

"Twenty years come Michaelmas."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," and the stranger's voice grew eager. "Then can you tell me whether you have a child in the house called Charlotte Martin?"

The matron shook her head. "Not that I know of. What age would she be?"

The man slapped his leg. "Bless'd if she wouldn't be nigh twenty! but I allays calls her a child still."

"We have none as old as that in St. Kevin's, they generally leave long before that age." The man's face fell, and Mrs. Smithies, one of whose red-tape "duties" it was to afford "every facility to persons claiming their children," continued, "Perhaps she may have been here some time. I will get the books."

She rang the bell, an aged pauper was despatched for the ponderous tomes, with which he soon reappeared. "Twenty years ago! did you leave her here?"

"Yes—a snowy night, and she was but a baby."

Mrs. Smithies opened a book marked "M," and slowly passed her finger down it—"Malan," "Makepeace," "Minton," "Moore," "Malvern." "There is no Martin here, you must have made a mistake. Stay—here is one, Marianne Martin, aged seven and a half, admitted August, died September, etc."

The man's face fell, but again brightened. "*That* can't be she! my little gal came here in the winter, and was only two months old."

"Twenty years ago—or nearly—"(as her visitor corrected her)—"I remember a baby being left on the doorstep, but no name was with her, and we called her Charity Moore. Is there any way you could identify her, do you think? we always keep the clothes."

The man shook his head despondingly. "I don't know nothing about clothes! but stay—I put her mother's locket with her. I should know *that* again."

Mrs. Smithies detached a key from a large bunch hanging at her girdle, and beckoning Mr. Martin (for that was his name) to follow, led the way to the "Left clothes press."

Here on shelves were neatly arranged piles of little clothes, all ticketed and labelled A, B, C, D, and she took down one from the shelf "M."

Inside were all the little coarse garments worn by the wee baby who, nearly twenty years before, had been laid on St. Kevin's doorstep. There was the warm quilted hood, the thick knitted socks, the dark merino frock—but her visitor

shook his head. All baby's clothes were alike to him, until a small chain and locket appeared. John Martin seized it with a cry of relief. Yes! that was the love-token he had given his young wife so many years before; there was the crimson heart, with its mystic meaning; and on it the very letters he had cut—"C. M."—Charlotte Martin. For a moment the man's head was bowed, as his thoughts winged away to his early happy life. He could see his wife's bonny face looking at him, smiling, he could hear the soft, "Thank you so much, John," as he once heard it, when he clasped the chain round her neck.

"Well! is that right?" Mrs. Smithies' voice recalled him to the present.

"Yes! all right! and what has become of my child?"

The matron told him all—of Charity's adoption by the Melvilles, of her sudden disappearance.

"Ain't she bin heard of?" John Martin's voice was strained and distressed.

"Not that I know of. Oh! she was an ungrateful hussy! but you can go if you like to Mr. Melville's. I have the address. It was left with me in case Charity might turn up here."

MR. R. MELVILLE,

5, TREVOR SQUARE.

John Martin took the card with many thanks, and set off to his destination. When he reached the house he noticed brown paper shading the windows, the steps unwashed, and the brass knocker dulled. "Family away from home" was the answer given by a funereal-faced charwoman, who had charge of the empty house. "No," she knew nothing about the servants, she only had charge of the house; "Yes," she had their country address, and as she had been told to give it to any enquirers she told this one.

So that sunny afternoon John Martin took the train down to the country town near which the Melvilles lived.

Charity was taking care of the children in the fields where the corn had been cut.

Ivy was playing "hide and seek" with Sybil in and out of the "stooks," quite unheeding the scratches received from the short stubble by her sturdy little legs.

Presently, just as the evening glow, flushing over the distant meadows, warned her it was time to take her charges in, the figure of John Martin appeared striding towards her.

"Be yons Mr. Melville's?" he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of the manor.

"Yes, sir," said Charity, and the voice made the stranger look into her face.

"Blest if that arn't Charlotte's voice!" he said, slapping his thigh in his usual manner. "What's your name, girl?"

"Charity Moore," she answered, unconscious of what was hanging on the answer.

"Then you are my darter, but no more Moore than I am, for my name's Martin, so yours must be too."

It was an abrupt way of announcing himself, and Charity's face turned pale. Like many nameless children, she had often thought of her parents turning up. But this return was so prosaic, this man so totally different to her ideas of a father, that she shrank away. Mechanically she caught Sybil in her strong arms, gathered Ivy's little fingers in her own brown hand, and turned to walk towards the house. John Martin followed,

with the silent endurance of an unimaginative man.

As they reached the old granite steps which led from the greensward up to the front door, Mrs. Melville appeared. She looked curiously at Charity's companion, and her nurse scarcely found voice to say, in a half-despairing low tone,—

"He says he is my father."

A few minutes after, the stranger found himself installed on a chair in the big study, with its two tall windows.

Mrs. Melville sat opposite him, her sweet face a little curious as she looked from one to the other. Charity herself with her hands clasped stood silently by her side.

"I went to St. Kevin's to find my darter, and they told me she was here." It was a bald statement of facts, and it fell on his listeners' ears as such.

"But tell me, Mr. Martin," said Mrs. Melville, "how do you know my Charity *is* your child?"

"My Charity!" the words caused a quiver to come on the girl's sensitive face, and John Martin, seemingly so passive, noticed it.

"I see she don't want her old father, so I may as well go away, ma'am."

In a moment Charity seemed to see the grey head bent with age, and her soul went out to her father,—

"I *do* want you, father!"

But Mrs. Melville broke in—"What makes you think she is yours? Tell us all, Mr. Martin—I would never keep your child from you."

There was a suspicion of moisture in the keen eyes, which looked so unflinchingly at the two facing him. Then he began.

"It's nigh twenty-two years ago that me and my wife war married. She war a comely, pretty lass, and yon gal is the living image of her. Well, we war pretty comfortable off at first, but after a time work got slack. I wor a builder, and the people about told me if I went to London I was sure of employment. Well, we sold off our bits o' things, and Chatty and me went up together. It looked all bright at first, and we war happy and contented, but my wife fell sick, and after the baby was born, it war hard work,—no victuals, no medicine, no doctor, and so she never got strong" (the man's voice

broke), "and then—and then she died. I made up my mind to emigrate. I had heard tell o' the gold fields in California, and so I begged a free passage. They wouldn't send my baby too, and either I must go or we must both starve.

"The child was always crying, and I had nought to feed it wi'. So one bitter cold night I got a woman in the house I lodged in to wrap it up snug, and then I took it out. I walked about some time, and begged for pence to buy something to feed the child, but nought a penny did I get. Then the baby woked up, and set on wailing. I didn't want to part wi' her, but I couldn't let her starve, so I laid the little bundle on the steps of St. Kevin's, rang the bell, and bolted. I had packed up the mother's locket, and yon gal is my darter. I ain't come to beg, for I ha' got a tidy sum o' money to live on, but if she don't want her father let her say so, and I won't trouble her no more."

It was a plain, unvarnished statement, but a certain earnestness in the man's manner made it deeply impressive. As he finished, he rose off his chair, and drawing his sleeve over his eyes, stood waiting. With a loud cry, the filial love woke in

Charity's heart; she ran over to the grizzled, rough old man, and laying her smooth warm cheek against the thin wrinkled one kissed him.

"Bless you, my lass!" he said huskily; "then you really wants your bad old father?"

Mrs. Melville slipped out of the room, leaving the two together, and it was not till late that night that John Martin left the house for a bed already ordered for him in the village.

Job Browne had gone on a message that day some distance off, and it was not until Charity was alone in the nursery, after her father left, that she thought how this might affect their mutual arrangements. In the long talk she had had with her father, she had been shocked at the thoughts and words which now and then he had displayed and spoken.

An oath not unfrequently, a light indifference to his former (from his own showing) wretched life, an unveiled contempt for God's Word, a sneer at religion in all its forms,—how could she introduce such a one into the pure, peaceful home Job and she were determined to have? Charity's heart stopped as she realized what the alternative was: either her father in the sanctified home life

they had looked forward to, or she to follow that hitherto unknown parent away to *his* home. Charity put the thought away from her that night, but her prayer went up from a heart unfaltering in its allegiance to God, though filled with fears for the future—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

CHAPTER IX.

"HOME."

"God sent His messenger of faith,
And whispered in the maiden's heart,
Rise up and look from where thou art,
And scatter with unselfish hands
Thy freshness on the barren sands
And solitudes of death."

The Golden Legend.

"YES, Job, it must be." Charity spoke. But her voice lacked the usual bright cheerful tones—it sounded husky with emotion. "Father claims my first duty, and you know 'it' was not to be till next spring anyhow. It only means a little extra waiting." There was a tremulous smile on Charity's sweet mouth, and the usually quiet hands were locking and unlocking their clasp of each other all the time she was speaking.

Job Browne stood opposite her with a perplexed look shining in his honest eyes, and

impatient words on his tongue. "Nonsense, Charity! why shouldn't it be as it always has been? why shouldn't you and I be married in April?"

"Oh! Job, I have told you before"—there was a weariness in the tones now—"father says he could never settle down in the country. It is busy town life he wants. You wouldn't want me to desert him, when he is all alone?"

"Didn't he desert you, and ain't *I* all alone?"

Job was not quite unreasoning in his arguments, but Charity was firm.

"Besides, Job"—the hands were now clinging to the strong arm—"besides, Job, I am thinking it is *work* given me to do for the Lord. I am afraid dear father isn't a Christian at all. Could I leave him like that, and not try to make him love God?"

Job was vanquished. "You are always right, Charity, but it's mighty hard."

And so he felt it. He was no young man, to whom the putting off his marriage meant only a few more months' bright anticipation. To this man, close verging on fifty, it meant some years less of what could only be a comparatively short

married life. Still, "self" was not enthroned in his heart, and he could appreciate and practise "self-sacrifice." "It was hard," but none the less right, and Job had learnt a lesson that is not an easy one, *i.e.*, "He that would be My disciple must 'deny himself.'"

Mrs. Melville was more put out by the decision than either Charity or Job appeared to be. She had gladly, though half-grudgingly, given up the nurse she so trusted to the prospect of a happy life, but it was different parting with her for a lonely, dreary one. John Martin was fond of his daughter in a selfish way. His life at the gold-diggings had taught him, "Every one for himself," and now he knew that unless Charity came to him he must be uncomfortable and lonely. He was not a really *bad* man, he would be neither cruel to his child nor forgetful of her, but he cared only to have her for his own comfort. He did not seem to think much of what she was giving up for him, but seemed to think he was offering a fair equivalent, when he had cosy rooms and plenty to eat ready for her. He was not an unfair man either,—twenty pounds, a very large slice of his savings, were despatched to St. Kevin's

to remunerate the house for its adoption of his deserted child. He did not think, however, that Charity needed any recompense for the hard, loveless years of her childhood. He bought her a new merino dress, gave her a pair of quaint foreign earrings, and then thought her sacrifice was fully repaid.

We will not dwell on the parting between Job and Charity—they both tried to look and speak cheerfully for each other's sake; nor of the tears the latter shed at saying good-bye to Ivy and Sybil. She would not be settled very far from Trevor Square, still she knew that not very often would she be able to spend a day with them.

Then she took up her life with her father. It was a comfortable enough abode he had prepared for her. The little parlour had a Brussels carpet laid down, quite a grand pair of curtains at the window, a small, black-framed mirror over the fireplace. The tiny kitchen was fitted up with necessary utensils, and the bedrooms were clean and cosy.

Still Charity felt strange. Her father was exceedingly independent in his ways, and would,

moreover, bring in "chums," who spoke words she shuddered to hear.

She wrote regularly to Job, in his lonely country exile, and in the letters which he greeted as weekly sunbeams there was no mention of the disagreeables of her position. Honest Job could not read "between the lines" the story of a woman's devotion, but would fold up the letters with a half sigh—"Charity seemed happy enough without him." He himself was such a bad scribe that his answers were brief, but hearty, and Charity used to kiss the big, blotted signature of him she trusted with her whole heart. Still she had her work to do, and she did it faithfully and well.

By degrees and gently she introduced the daily reading of a chapter to her father. "It pleases her and don't hurt me," Martin used to say, and really it was a pleasure to him to hear her soft voice read anything. He would lean back in his comfortable chair, with his long pipe in his mouth, at which he puffed contentedly while Charity read to him. Sometimes, however, it was different. When two or three "chums" came in, and glasses of whiskey and water were freely indulged

in, harsh words would be flung at the girl, or black scowls given in exchange for any remonstrance on her part. At such times Charity would steal away if possible to her room, and on her knees would pray for wisdom and patience. Poor child! his rough tenderness was enough to make her cling to him, and yet she was so often thrown back on herself!

The winter that followed was a very severe one; the snow lay thick on the streets of London; the keen north wind, sweeping round the corners, blew it into deep drifts, and the Frost King had it almost all his own way. The little house was built as so many are now, with walls of a single brick thickness, with the most meagre of window sashes, and least defensive of doors. The cruel wind found its way through many a crevice, but thanks to Charity's good constitution and healthy frame she did not suffer. John Martin, however, fresh from tropical lands, found the cold almost unbearable. Many and strong potations of whiskey did not put warmth into his shivering body, and from a hale, well-to-do, middle-aged man, he suddenly became feeble and old, fretted at his own effeminacy, with his thin hands

spread out over the welcome blaze, querulous with Charity and vexed with himself.

"It's all this horrid England!" he would say. "I have a great mind to emigrate again."

Charity's heart-sinking would not prevent her answering cheerfully, "Oh, this won't last long, father—spring will soon be here, and then you will be your old self again."

However, when spring came it brought only partial restoration to Martin. He had a distaste for going out much, and slowly and surely his health failed. The summer time, when her good friend and mistress Mrs. Melville was away in the country, was the hardest time. It had become evident to all except the sick man himself that his days were numbered. His "chums," to his great bitterness, deserted him. "It ain't so pleasant to sit and talk with a death's head," they would say, and John Martin was left alone with his child.

It was now that Charity stepped in, and told him of a Friend that would never desert him, of One who would not leave him in the shadowed valley alone. Her father listened, with a racking cough constantly interrupting her, but the sweet

old words of comfort gradually wooing him to his Saviour—"Aye! I am tired and need it," he said one night as Charity read "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

The hot summer days made him very languid, and gradually the willing arms of his daughter came but to signify the Everlasting ones stretched out for him.

"Are you sure it's meant for me, Chatty?" And the promise, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out," was repeated. "Yes, it seems to mean me—but it is ungrateful like to go to Him only because my old chums have left me and I have no one else—howsumever, I can't help it!"

When the deepening Virginian creeper tried to make up for the roses' disappearance, the end came. Charity led her father as far as she could through the dark valley, and when he let go the earthly hand, it was but to clasp a more tender and stronger one. There was more than a glow of sunset in the man's eyes as he drew near the Celestial Hills—it was the flush of a happy surprise at the glorious reception his Saviour gave him.

"Father has gone home at last, dear Job, now I am ready to come to you." So wrote Charity in innocent honesty on the day of John Martin's death, and Job took the earliest train to London. It was scarcely a year since he had bidden his sweetheart farewell, and she had entered her short time of probation. As he clasped her in his arms he thanked God for his true-hearted, unselfish wife.

The funeral was a simple one, and the humble *cortège* wound round the road Charity had once taken, years ago—over the canal, past the gas-works, until at the gate of the beautiful cemetery they were met by the minister with the words of hope, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Then, by the side of his wife—his loved Chatty of bygone days—they left all that was mortal of John Martin.

Charity had several sympathizing letters from Mrs. Melville, who, however, from some indisposition of Sybil's, was not able to comfort her personally, but having Job at hand she scarcely seemed to need any one else. All arrangements were being made for their marriage, and, during the three weeks which had to elapse, he was in

and out continually. They were to live in the pretty little lodge belonging to the old manor house, and many things out of her present home could be utilized to furnish her future abode. Charity shed a few natural tears as she took down and packed away the things prepared for her scarce a year ago by her father. But there was no bitterness in her grief. Job's thoughtful tenderness more than compensated for the loss of Martin's rough care.

"Job," she said one day, "I must have some one to act mother for me on our wedding-day! I have thought of somebody, if you will spare a day to go with me to ask her."

So one frosty morning they set off, and on the way stopped to put some fresh flowers on the mound marking John Martin's resting-place. Down the long poplar-bordered road—past where the bargemen were poling their unwieldy vessels through the muddy water—over the canal, until a pretty little hostel came in sight.

"There is the 'Harvest Home,' Job," said Charity, "where I had such a kind friend. I promised to go and see her when I could. Let us go in now." And so together they walked up

the prim little walk—together they gazed at the signboard, with its huge representation of a wheat sheaf, hanging over their heads, and Charity thanked God silently as she contrasted this visit with the last.

Cheery Mrs. Irons was in her private parlour, but the sound of feet brought her out. For a moment she did not recognize the comely, well-dressed young woman before her. "Why, Charity Moore, as sure as I'm alive!" she ejaculated with a hearty kiss.

"Not Charity Moore now, Mrs. Irons, but Charity Martin."

"Then I suppose you've been and gone and got married, and is this your husband?" extending a welcoming hand. Charity blushed, but Job shook it heartily.

"Not yet, ma'am, but she's soon going to be my wife, and then she will change her name again, and be Charity Browne."

This required an explanation, and as it threatened to be a long one, it was not allowed to be given until a lunch of cold roast beef and cups of fresh, creamy milk had been partaken of.

Mrs. Irons listened attentively afterwards, and

then Charity asked her to come and be present at their marriage.

"Of course I will, my dear, and as I likes the looks o' your gudeman as is to be, I will gladly act mother."

So it was settled, and then Mrs. Irons got out an old china mug, with hideous gold and green dragons on it, and presented it solemnly to the bride. "Bless you both!" said the good woman. "I'll be wi' you, Charity, on Thursday morning early."

And so, one foggy autumn morning, without any "choral service" or pealing of bells, in St. Luke's Church, were joined the most honest and loving of hands, as the hearts had been united long before.

Charity's voice tremulous and low, Job Browne's firm and quiet, pronounced their mutual promises, while Mrs. Irons' answer "I do," when asked who gave the bride away, completed the ceremony.

* * * * *

Ivy was in her "best frock," and Sybil, quite recovered from her childish ailment, glorious in hers too. The two little blue-robed maidens stood at the door of a pretty cottage, covered with

late roses and flowering climbers. Ivy had a basket in her hand, which she carried carefully and proudly, and her smaller sister had a posy of flowers. The level rays of the October sun lovingly kissed their faces as they trotted gravely up the garden path.

"S'pose she's not at home." Sybil's suggestion was drowned by the energetic knock given by her companion on the door.

"In course she are," and Ivy's faith was rewarded by the opening of the door by a sweet-faced girl, once Charity Martin.

"Don't lift me up, please, Cherry, till I put this down;" but the basket having been laid carefully on the floor, a pair of very soft loving arms were placed round Charity's neck, and a long kiss given.

"That's what dada calls a 'dweller'; now, Sybie, you give a 'pecker.'"

The obedient little sister touched Charity's cheek with a pair of crimson lips, and then presented gravely her bunch of flowers. Ivy next gave her basket, with its little gift, worked by her own wee fingers, in it. Charity had only come to her new home the night before, but Mrs.

Melville's loving forethought had caused it all to be ready for her. Ivy was charmed to sit at the little round table and drink tea out of the pretty cups belonging to the service her mother had given Charity. Sybil seemed to appreciate best a slice of the fine cake also sent down from the manor house. Job was overpowered with the magnificence of the silver spoons and forks laid out on his own table, the gift of Mr. Melville, but the loving glances of his young wife's eyes seemed still more overpowering.

Ivy decided "Mr. Job was werry gweer," because he treated her as a little princess, but as she liked being made much of she did not object. Tea being finished, the little pair trotted off, Ivy only remembering her mother's message at the last moment. "Please, Mrs. Charity" (her own recognition of her nurse's brevet rank), "mudder says, 'God bress you! and she hopes you's happy.'"

Charity Browne's eyes were full of tears as she watched them away, but it was happiness made both her eyes wet and her voice tremulous as she turned to Job—"God has been very good to us, let us thank Him."

Together then they knelt, and their first united prayer under their own home-roof ascended to heaven.

There remains but little to be told. Job and Charity's home was a quiet, peaceful one. By-and-bye some little ones came to patter on the red-tiled floor, and to make the house musical with silvery laughter and merry voices.

A few visitors arrived now and then,—a certain kind-faced matron, who spoilt the children by showering "goodies" and cakes on them, and who told wonderful stories about a "Harvest Home"; a welcome "angel," bright and quick, flew in sometimes, but never stayed long; a pale-faced boy, whose mother's name was "Patty," occasionally spent a month with them.

And so we say farewell to Charity, a "stray" no longer, but happy in a home of her own, and yet happier in the expectation of a Home "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

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